

**ROCKET
SCIENCE**

NCVO

Evaluating FareShare's Impact on Individuals

A Rocket Science & NCVO Report

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Executive Summary

Executive Summary

This evaluation found that FareShare is making a significant contribution to people's social, physical and mental wellbeing through the food they provide to charities in the UK.

Both survey and qualitative findings suggest that receiving free or low cost food is the primary driver for people accessing charities that provide food, but whilst there, considerable social and community connections were developing. The social connections being developed appeared to vary depending on the type of charity being accessed. In some situations, people in crisis were able to form one to one relationships with staff, who could provide formal pathways to financial advice, welfare and housing support to reduce crisis, while also providing food. We found that charities that provided food only, without formal pathways to other services were also supporting beneficiaries to achieve increased social connectedness that enhanced wellbeing.



The nature of the social connections that are made possible due to the initial draw provided by the food are complex. For many, the role of food remains a central motivation for accessing the charities that FareShare supplies with food. For many, however, accessing low cost/free food in this way has helped to reduce social isolation. For many, accessing the charities regularly to access free or low cost food had led to the development of a sense of community. In the deep dive sites, we saw evidence of the development of solidaristic communities where people were beginning to develop informal connections. We also heard many accounts of situations where the food available each week had acted as a gateway to conversation between those attending the sites. These informal connections appeared to be enabled by conversations about how to use unusual ingredients.

The notion that the food was surplus food appeared to be enhancing people's motivation to explore new ways to use ingredients, while also giving a sense of reciprocity that offset the potential for stigma. Conversations around food, and how to use ingredients appeared to be extending many people's repertoire of foods and meal ideas, while also providing a gateway to informal discussions between people, who over time, shared ideas with each other about where to access support locally. This appeared to be increasing the social impact of the food by enhancing connections between people, and improving access to a higher variety of good quality food.



The evaluation also found that FareShare food was having a positive impact on people because receiving free food via Foodbanks had improved access to food, enabling those in crisis, or in deep poverty to meet urgent nutritional and calorific needs. This was acutely felt, and met an urgent need particularly for those without recourse to public funds who reported that without this food, they may otherwise have gone hungry. For those on low and/or fixed incomes, access to low cost food was found to be alleviating some of the stress and worry associated with the impact of the cost of living crisis by enabling household budgets to stretch further.



Chapter one: introduction

Background and aim of evaluation

FareShare is the UK's longest running food redistribution charity. They operate across the UK and redistribute surplus food across a network of 8500 charities and community groups. They aim to provide good quality food to those in need of it, while also reducing food waste. FareShare regularly undertakes monitoring and evaluation activities to ensure that they are achieving their aim of maximising the social impact of surplus food. To date, however, all evaluation activity has focused on examining the impact of FareShare's activities from perspectives of the staff and volunteers. While staff and volunteers have valuable insights to share, this evaluation was borne out of a recognition that there was a knowledge gap in relation to impact from the perspectives of direct beneficiaries themselves, those people who receive food. The overarching aim of the evaluation on which this report is based was to understand the social impact that FareShare is having from the perspectives of people in receipt of FareShare food.

The evaluation was undertaken by Rocket Science in partnership with the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), and was supported by a Research Advisory Group (RAG), comprising of people with lived experience of receiving food support. The evaluation was undertaken to examine the following questions:

1. What is the impact of FareShare's work on individuals who access food services?
 - a. Does this align with the outcomes identified in FareShare's existing theory of change?
 - b. Are some outcomes more meaningful to people accessing food than others?
 - c. Are there additional outcomes that FareShare is not currently accounting for?
2. What is FareShare's contribution towards achieving outcomes for individuals? In future, how can FareShare measure and report on impact on individuals?
3. Which types of organisations and food provisions are better at achieving social outcomes for individuals? What can FareShare learn from these findings as to the types of organisations that may be better at maximising the social value of surplus food?



Chapter two: methodology

In this chapter, we outline the methods used within the evaluation. We begin by explaining the valuable contribution that was made by the research advisory group who supported the research design and analysis process. We then discuss the ethical processes involved, before going on to discuss the methodological approach taken with the survey and the deep dive sites. Finally, we address the challenge posed by identifying the contribution made by FareShare due to the complex systems in which the charities and network partners operate by outlining how contribution was identified and understood.

Experts by experience research advisory group

All partners involved in this evaluation held a shared commitment and belief in the need for a participatory approach, informed and guided by the perspectives of people who have received food support. To ensure that the voices of people who have received FareShare food (direct beneficiaries) were maximised throughout the design and delivery of the evaluation, the evaluation team worked closely with FareShare distribution centres to promote the RAG, identify people who were accessing food supplied by FareShare and invite applications to the group. Following an initial low response, a more targeted approach was developed focussing on people who had previously been involved in evaluation-related activities for FareShare. This resulted in the successful recruitment of two RAG members. While this was a smaller group than the team had initially envisaged, both members remained consistently engaged throughout the evaluation and made considerable contributions to the research design, and the analysis process. The RAG members played a key role in designing the survey wording, and in designing the interview topic guides. They also contributed to the analysis of data by taking part in discussions related to the survey and qualitative research findings. Both RAG members were paid living wage for their time, and opted to receive this in the form of vouchers for their local supermarket.

Ethics

The evaluation design was reviewed by NCVO's internal research ethics committee, and by the Rocket Science Director responsible for quality assurance, and obtained approval from both in May 2023, thereby enabling the evaluation activity to commence.



All evaluation tools, including the survey and the interview topic guides were co-created by the NCVO and Rocket Science evaluation team in consultation with the experts by experience RAG. Care was taken to identify wording and terminology to ensure that the evaluation tools were designed in a way that was inclusive, and unlikely to cause distress to participants. The research tools then went through rigorous processes of internal quality assurance within both NCVO and Rocket Science. Following approvals, the interview topic guides were piloted with the RAG and further amendments were made. The survey was further tested with FareShare staff and a small service user group and again with the RAG.

Survey

As noted above, the survey wording was developed using a consultative process, involving the evaluation team, the RAG and FareShare. The survey was then scripted on the survey platform SurveyMonkey, and an online survey link and QR code was created. A combination of electronic and paper versions of the survey were distributed through FareShare's regional centres and FareShare Go to organisations (charities and community organisations) that had received redistributed food within the last three months. The organisations then disseminated the survey to people accessing food support via posters and flyers with QR codes. Organisations distributing the paper versions were provided a stamped addressed envelope for the return of completed forms.

The inclusion criteria for the survey were people aged 18 and over and who had received food support at least three times within the last three months. Additionally, we considered that it would be unethical to ask people who were experiencing acute mental health crisis to complete the survey, so charities did not approach people who were accessing food support who they felt fell into this category.

To incentivise participation those completing the survey were offered the chance to be entered into a draw to receive one of ten £15 Tesco vouchers. The evaluation team, in consultation with the RAG felt that the £15 voucher amount may increase motivation to participate in the survey without putting undue pressure on people who may feel compelled to fill in the survey due to experiencing difficult financial circumstances.



The survey ran from the 5th July to the 31st August 2023. It is estimated that the potential reach of the survey was 828,167 people, this included distribution of over 1,000 paper copies¹. In total 2,619 survey responses were received of which 2,045 were electronic and 574 were paper based.

For this analysis, we have used a 95% confidence interval - so where a result is statistically significant, we can be 95% certain that this result is not due to random error.

We used R and Excel for the quantitative data analysis. Specific tests are listed throughout the report as and when we used them.

Data tables can be found in appendix one. A copy of the survey can be found in [appendix 2](#).

Deep dive sites

The evaluation team worked with FareShare, its network partners and regional centres to identify charities who could be invited to take part in the qualitative data collection. A purposive sampling approach was taken, with consideration given to the type of charity to ensure a diverse sample. Selection criteria was developed in partnership with FareShare to establish, a diverse sample that represented different types of food provision, with a combination of rural and urban areas. Selection criteria considerations were based upon:

- The support the charity receives from FareShare.
- The type/category of organisation (e.g., super pantry, food service only, community organisation, community larder etc.)
- Location (e.g., urban/rural).
- Demographics of people accessing the service (where known and where relevant).
- Size of the charity.
- Miscellaneous notes and information, including weblinks to allow the evaluation team to conduct further research and better understand the nature of each organisation.

Site recruitment to the evaluation was conducted through an initial meeting to discuss the evaluation aims, approach and methods. In all three sites, it was agreed that due to the nature of the services being provided, full days of immersive research would be advantageous. This entailed a member of the research team attending each site for a full day of data collection. This gave opportunities for a

¹ Estimated total reach is based on FareShare data including the number of distribution centres and charity intermediaries involved.



combination of observational research, as well as interviews with people who were accessing food at the charities. In total, 48 interviews were conducted across the three sites Table 1 below details the sites involved and the methods employed

Table 1. Summary of the deep dive sites

Site	Location	Food offer	Methodology
Granton Mission Foodbank	Granton, Edinburgh, urban area of high deprivation	Foodbank with formal referrals and a drop in clinic with welfare rights and housing officers	Observations 13 x shorter version interviews with individuals 1 x in depth interview with a volunteer 1 x in depth interview with a housing advisor
Rhubarb Farm	Midlands, three semi-rural villages	Social supermarket/food hubs	Observations 11 x shorter style interviews
Littlehampton Community Fridge	Sussex, small coastal town	Community fridge/freezer only; no other support service	Observation 1 x depth interviewee with a volunteer 6 x depth interviews with individuals 15 x shorter conversations

The researchers took detailed notes at each of the sites. This included interview notes, with verbatim quotes where possible and observational notes. Observational notes included researcher reflections related to the following:

- The nature of the service provided.
- Systems that appeared to be in place.
- The nature of the space where food is distributed, including how conducive the space was to the social aspects of the interactions.

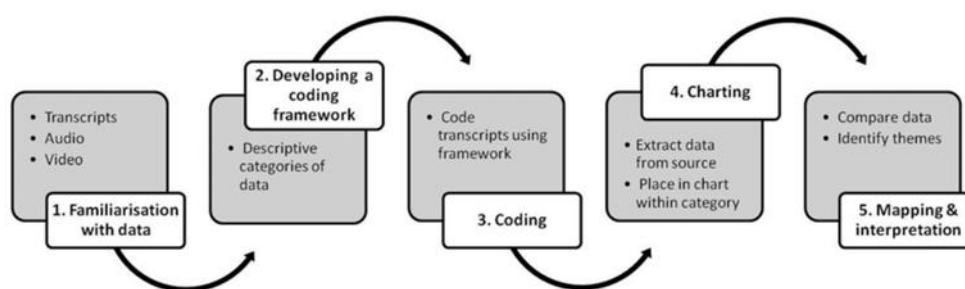
- Any other services provided by the charity at the same time as food is provided.
- General reflections about the backgrounds, circumstances and experiences of people accessing the service, gathered from interactions with them.
- Challenges experienced within the place, space and service.

The interview questions are provided in [Appendix 3](#).

Qualitative analysis process

All researcher notes, quotes and transcripts were uploaded into software package MaxQDA. The qualitative data were manually coded using a structured framework technique. This involved several sequential steps. First, the researchers engaged in line-by-line descriptive coding, where concepts, excerpts and reflections were broken down into 'chunks' and assigned labels related to meaning. A combination of deductive and inductive coding was used, which meant that the researchers used the evaluation framework to identify key learnings from the data while remaining open to new and unexpected discoveries that arose during the analytic process. From these chunks, the researchers identified a coding hierarchy by grouping together similar concepts and identifying how these fit with the overarching evaluation focus and aims. This process is outlined in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Qualitative analysis process



Five-step process in Framework Analysis, based on Ritchie and Spencer (1994).

Contribution analysis



In order to determine the factors that maximise the social impact of surplus food, contribution analysis was used. This allowed the evaluation team to examine the range of factors that contribute to outcomes, acknowledging that some of these are contextual, some individual, some related to the offer of food itself, and others to the type and nature of service.

At stage one of the evaluation, we met with the FareShare project team, and then with each of the regional distribution centres to identify the key outcomes that should be tested, and to identify clear goals for the analysis. We combined this with a review of the FareShare theory of change (see [Appendix 4](#)), and available data identified six key outcomes for people accessing redistributed food that were agreed to be explored as part of the evaluation. These were:

- Improved access to food (outcome 1).
- Financial savings (outcome 2).
- Experiencing new foods (outcome 3).
- Individuals connect with others and feel part of their community (outcome 4).
- Reduced social isolation (outcome 5).
- Improved health and wellbeing (outcome 6).

Subsequently a desk review was undertaken to:

- Identify how strong the evidence was in favour of FareShare's contribution to each of the key outcomes, and to form initial hypotheses about the elements that were contributing to positive change for people receiving food.
- Identify potential external, contextual or service-related factors that were influencing change (whether positively or negatively).
- Identify gaps in the evidence to be further explored through the evaluation. and informed the survey and interview topic guide design.

A summary table of the desk review findings is provided in [Appendix 5](#). These findings were used to inform the research tool design by identifying key areas that required further analysis as part of the evaluation. The following gaps were identified through the desk review as requiring further analysis and data collection.

- What components or factors increase social connectedness and foster a sense of community and how important is this to people who receive FareShare food? Why? What does this tell



us about the types of charities and methods of food provision that might maximise social outcomes within FareShare distribution channels?

- To what extent is receiving FareShare food helping people financially, especially within the context of the cost-of-living crisis? How does this relate to social outcomes?
- What factors are most important to the people receiving food, from their own perspectives? What helps them most? Does the theory of change need to be revised?

The aim of the evaluation was, from the outset, to understand FareShare's social impact and the extent to which they are achieving their intended outcomes from the perspectives of direct beneficiaries. We understood from the initial and ongoing consultations with FareShare, that there were some assumptions that were under-explored and yet to be articulated as part of the theory of change. These related to a question as to the impact of stigma upon those receiving food, whether some types of charities and service provision may be better than others at reducing stigma, and why. Another assumption, or area for further analysis related to whether the concept of surplus food reduced stigma, and whether choice was an important or empowering factor from the perspectives of end beneficiaries. Therefore, the following thematic areas were identified as priority areas to explore throughout the analysis:

- The impact and significance of choice, and its relationship to social outcomes.
- The impact and significance of stigma, and its relationship to social outcomes.
- The impact and significance of the food being surplus, and the relationship between this concept and social outcomes.

Within this, FareShare sought to identify what factors were most important to those receiving food, to better understand barriers and enablers to achieving social outcomes.



Chapter three: survey findings

This chapter begins by providing a summary of key findings, including the characteristics of respondents, why respondents were accessing food support charities, the outcomes they noted achieving as a result, and the perceived factors that lead to the attainment of these outcomes. After providing this summary section, we go on to outline demographic information in more detail, and then discuss the different types of charities, and the differences between outcomes related to types of food, engagement with services, and indicate some of the reasons why people continue to engage with charities following the initial draw provided by the food available. From here, the chapter indicates which outcomes that are the most meaningful to those accessing food. We also consider the factors that appear to be maximising social outcomes, from the perspectives of survey respondents.

Summary of survey findings

Characteristics of respondents

We found that respondents demographics had many similarities to the Food Foundation's research² regarding who experiences food insecurity. This similarity includes higher rates of respondents from ethnic minority backgrounds (global majority), those with lives limited by health conditions and disabilities, families and caregivers, as well as those in employment, along with high rates of unemployed individuals and those in receipt of state benefits. We had some similarities with FareShare's internal profile data but also some differences, for example FareShare profile data has higher rates of men and families with children than our data.

- Respondents were from diverse backgrounds relative to general UK population data, particularly in terms of age (67% were between 35 and 64) and ethnicity (71% White British). 76% were women and 23% were men.
- Slightly more than half (51%) had lives limited by health problem or condition,
- Slightly more than 1 in 3 (37%) of those accessing food support were in employment. The others were unemployed, long-term sick, retired or full-time carers.
- Around 6 in 10 (59%) respondents were claiming state benefits (including tax credits) and a similar percentage (63%) self-described as low income, although this is likely to be an under-representation.

² Food Foundation, Food insecurity tracking, round 12. [Link](#)



- 42% accessed food support-only organisations. A further 17% accessed community centres and 11% faith organisations to access food support.

Why respondents access organisations

- 51% of respondents stated they initially accessed their organisation because of the affordable/free food offer and 27% for emergency food support.
- The most important reason for continued access was more commonly due to the food offer (+81%), followed by the wider support offer (+61%) that the organisation provided (using net agreement score).

Outcomes

- Individuals accessing food support reported a range of positive outcomes, particularly related to feeling good about stopping waste (+89%), trying new food (+81%), feeling part of the community (+78%), eating more fruit and veg (+76%), increased wellbeing (+75%) and less financial pressure (+73%).
- The most meaningful outcomes reported by respondents were enhanced food accessibility and diversity, increased financial savings and the closely connected outcome - improved mental health, being able to access to more support and an increasing sense of community connectedness.
- Respondents experienced outcomes differently: We found several correlations in the data including that disabled people and those accessing family support tended to experience less strong outcomes than their counterparts (non-disabled people and those not accessing family services). Older people had stronger scores related to skipping meals and feeling good stopping food going to waste than their younger counterparts. Young people fared better in terms of energy and health. Global majority respondents tended to experience stronger outcomes than White British counterparts. Those who are unemployed were more likely to report skipping fewer meals, to see their kids doing better at school, and to be eating more healthily because of food support.

Types of organisations and outcomes

- We found some limited evidence that different types of organisations were associated with delivering different outcomes. We found evidence, for example, that community centres, faith organisations and food service-only organisations all led to individuals having a strong sense of being part of the community. However, across the other outcomes areas, the difference was minimal.



- We did not find any difference in types of food and outcomes. We designed the question as a multiple-choice question as many people access more than one type of food in organisations for example food parcels and snacks. Therefore, it meant it was more challenging to try and isolate single choices. Nevertheless, we did explore this and did not find any differences. The deep dive sites offer some additional insight into this.

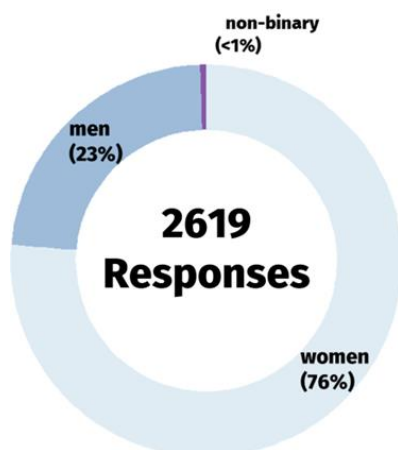
Enablers and most important aspects of the support

- The most important aspects of the food support were the food being offered at a place respondents knew and trust (+85%), and the food otherwise going to waste (+84%).
- The most helpful aspect of support for respondents involved accessing free/affordable food. Tied very closely to food support was improved diet, reduced financial burden and improved mental health.

We reference FareShare internal data³ on the profile of those accessing food through their redistributed food and external research, including the Food Foundation’s research into food insecurity.

Respondent demographics

There were a total of 2619 responses to the survey. Of these, 2045 people filled in the online survey and 574 the paper version. A total of 76% (n=2171) of respondents were women, as figure 1 below shows. The survey findings suggest a gendered dimension to food insecurity.



³ FareShare Full, *Impact Survey 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey results* (FareShare Internal Report) [Accessed September to November 2023]



Fig. 1: Number and gender of respondents

These findings align with research conducted by the Living Wage Foundation (2021)⁴, who report that women in the UK are currently facing higher levels of poverty than men. The majority of respondents within our survey (71%) identified as being White British, as outlined in figure 2 below (n=2164). This corresponds with profile data captured by FareShare where they estimate 74% of those accessing food support are White British and that 26% are from a range of other backgrounds⁵. It is slightly lower than the general UK population where 82% of the population identify as White British⁶. Therefore, our sample has higher rates of respondents from the global majority than the UK population. This finding aligns with research conducted by Food Foundation (2023) which suggests that people from global majority backgrounds are more likely to be at risk of experiencing food insecurity⁷.

⁴ Living Wage Foundation (2021) Women have long been trapped in essential work that pays too little: It is time to make amends Accessed: [Women have long been trapped in essential work that pays too little: it's time to make amends. | Living Wage Foundation \(based on Living Wage Foundation analysis of ONS data\)](#)

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ ONS, *Ethnicity Fact and Figures (based on 2021 census)* Available online: [Ethnicity facts and figures – GOV.UK \(ethnicity-facts-figures.service.gov.uk\)](#) [Accessed September 2023]

⁷ The Food Foundation (2023), *Food Insecurity Tracking, Round 13*, Available online: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking> [Accessed November 2023]

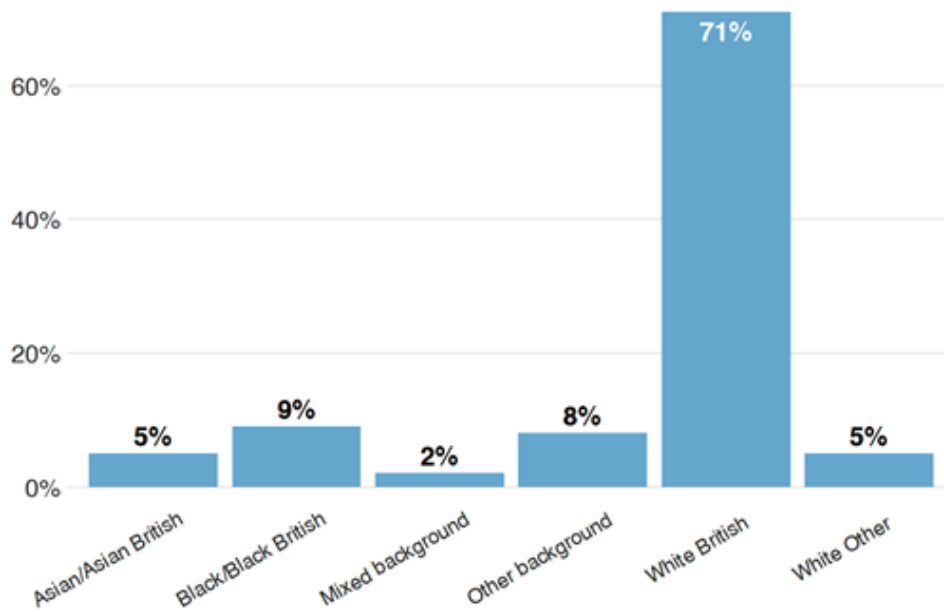


Fig. 2: Ethnicity of respondents

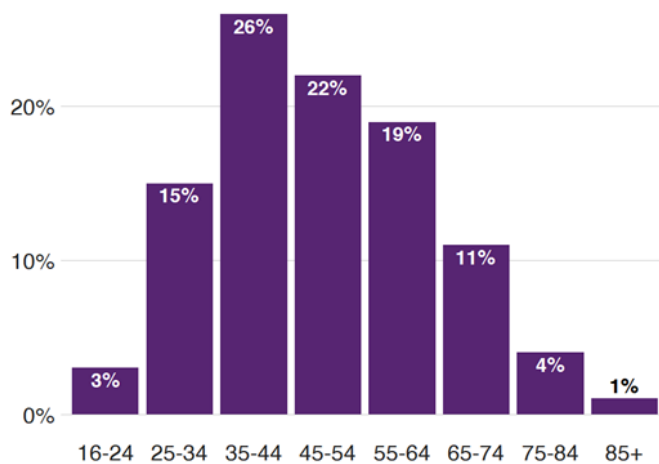


Fig. 3: Age of respondents

We had some representation from across all age groups, with the majority of respondents (67%) aged between 35 and 64, as per figure 3 above (n =2,185). Profile data collected by FareShare suggests the majority of the charities they (54%) support reach a demographic that includes older people⁸. This may mean we have an over-representation of younger people. While our survey was for those aged 18 and over, we kept the age 16-24 age bracket as this is a standard measure. If we compare who

⁸ FareShare Full, *Impact Survey 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey results* (FareShare Internal Report) [Accessed September to November 2023]



took part against UK census data⁹, we can see that we have an over-representation of the 35-64 age brackets in our survey. Please see the table below for further comparison.

Table 2. Age of respondents compared to the wider UK population

Age bracket	UK Census data	Survey respondents	Difference
18-24	8%	3%	Lower
25-34	13.50%	15%	Slightly higher
35-44	13%	26%	Much higher
45-54	13%	22%	Much higher
55 – 64	12.50%	19%	Much higher
65 – 74	10%	11%	Slightly higher
75 – 84	6%	4%	Slightly lower
85+	2.50%	1%	Slightly lower

⁹ ONS Age by Single Year, Census 2021 (2022) Available to download: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/datasets/TS007/editions/2021/versions/1> [Accessed September 2023]

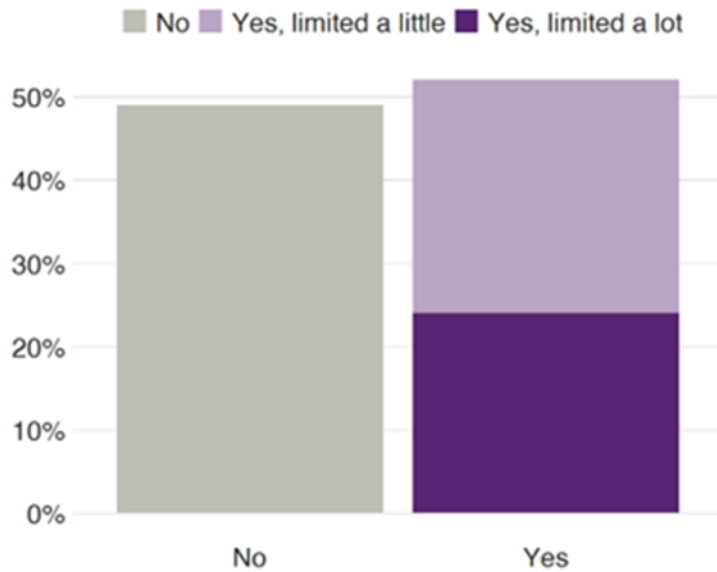


Fig. 4: Life-limiting conditions

The sample was roughly evenly split down the middle when considering whether respondents had a health problem or disability (assessed by whether their day-to-day activities are limited), n=2,017, as per figure 4 above. Profile data held by FareShare¹⁰ suggests 34% of the charities they supply reach people with a physical disability. The question we asked is broader, exploring limitations that included both mental and physical conditions which may explain the higher proportion, to a degree. UK disability rates are estimated at 24% of the population¹¹. We prefer to ask the question on life limitation as we feel it better captures people's limitations as a result of long-term conditions in addition to those with physical disability. Food Foundation research asserts that disabled people are more than three times at risk of food insecurity than non-disabled people.¹²

¹⁰ FareShare Full, *Impact Survey 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey results* (FareShare Internal Report) [Accessed September to November 2023]

¹¹ Gov.uk, *Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021-2022 (2023)*, Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2021-to-2022> [Accessed October 2023]

¹² Key Stats, [Dietary Inequalities | Food Foundation](#)

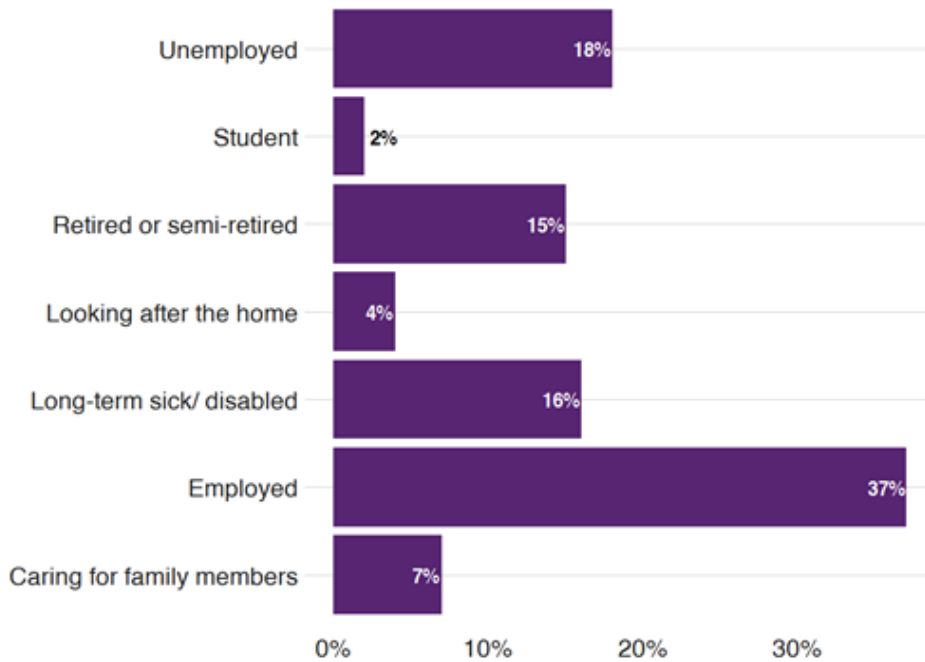


Fig. 5: Working status

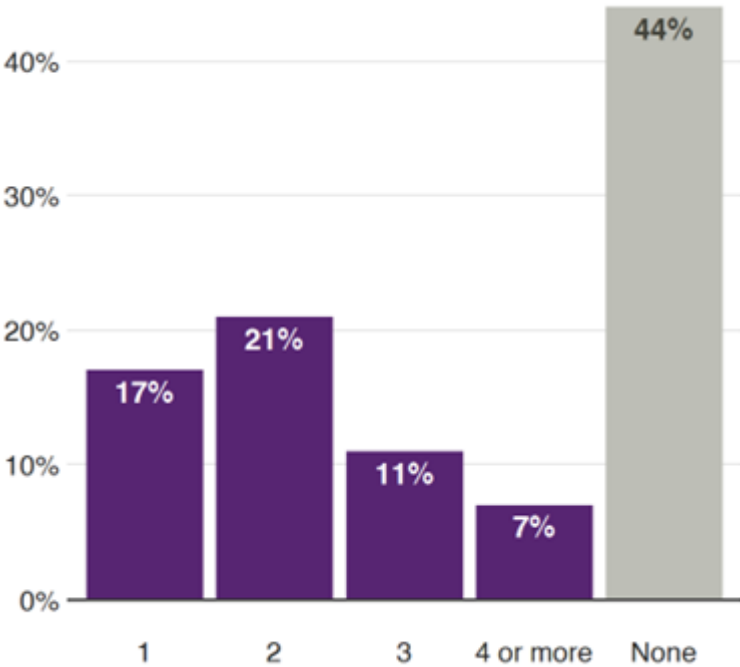
37% of survey respondents were employed (n=2,081). Around 1 in 5 (18%) were unemployed, with a further 16% experiencing long-term sickness, 15% in retirement or semi-retirement and 7% reported being carers (see figure 5 above). This differs from FareShare profile data which asserts that 34% of those accessing food support for the first time are unemployed and 57% in employment¹³. This however is not a like-for-like comparison as FareShare's data relates to first time access. Further, when comparing with UK government data where employment is 75% and unemployment for those

¹³ FareShare Full, *Impact Survey 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey results* (FareShare Internal Report) [Accessed September to November 2023]



aged 16-64 sits at 4.1%¹⁴, we can see much higher rates of unemployment among our cohort than the general population. Regardless, with 1 in 3 survey respondents reporting being in employment it is apparent that, for some, currently being employed is not enough to prevent food insecurity. This corresponds to Food Foundation research which found that 38.6% of people who are food insecure are also in employment¹⁵.

Fig. 6: Respondents with children



More than half (56%) of respondents had at least one child, with 18% having 3 or more children (n=2,133) as per figure 6 above. FareShare profile data (ibid) holds that 75% of their charities reach families with children so this is slightly lower than FareShare data. The average English family has 1.7 children¹⁶. We recognise there is slight variation in the other nations but nevertheless, this demonstrates that our sample tends to have larger families than the wider population. This reflects

¹⁴ [Employment in the UK - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)
¹⁵ [New data shows UK essential workers face devastating food insecurity levels | Food Foundation.](#)
¹⁶ ONS Census 2021, Average number of dependent children per family in England and Wales, 2020 and 2021, Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/families/adhocs/15662averagenumberofdependentchildrenperfamilyinenglandandwales2020and2021> [Accessed November 2023]



Food Foundation research that shows families in general¹⁷ and larger families with more than two children disproportionately face financial insecurity.

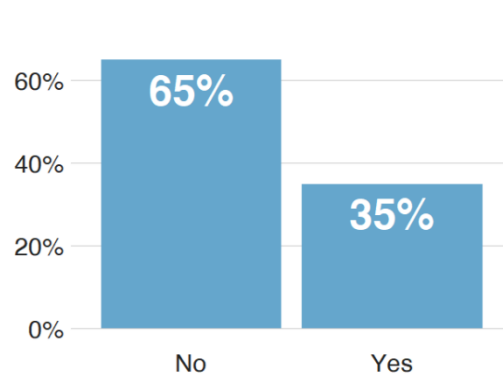


Fig. 7: Respondents with caring responsibilities

Around 1 in 3 (35%, n=2,003) reported having additional caring responsibilities, (see figure 7). This is higher than FareShare profile data on demographics reached by charities (26%)¹⁸.

Among the wider population (England-based), ONS states that 5% of the population are carers¹⁹. Again, this will vary nation to nation but demonstrates that our sample has significantly higher caring responsibilities than the wider population. This corresponds to external data from Carer's UK that shows that those with unpaid caring responsibilities face higher rates of food insecurity²⁰.

¹⁷ Food Foundation (2023), *Food Insecurity Tracking: Round 13*, Available online: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking#tabs/Round-13> [Accessed November 2023].

¹⁸ FareShare Full, *Impact Survey 2022-23 Annual Impact Survey results* (FareShare Internal Report) [Accessed September to November 2023]

¹⁹ ONS Census 2021, Unpaid Care: England and Wales: Census 2021, Available online: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthandwellbeing/bulletins/unpaidcareenglandandwales/census2021> [Accessed November 2023]

²⁰ Carer's UK, *State of Caring, The Impact of Caring on Finances October 2023* Available online: [CUK State of Caring 2023 \(carersuk.org\)](https://carersuk.org) [Accessed November 2023]

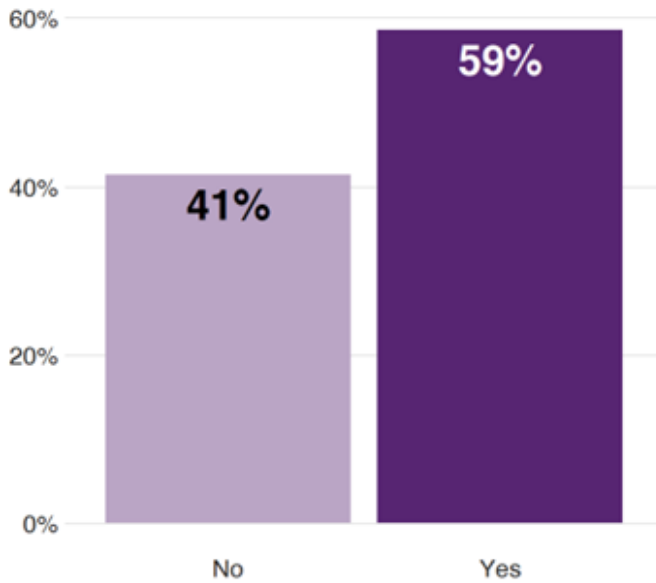


Fig. 8: State benefits

Around 6 in 10 (59%, n=1,989) respondents were claiming state benefits (including tax credits). In the qualitative responses (survey and deep dive sites), there were several examples of people who were not eligible for state support, who were in work, but were struggling financially. They reported that there were barriers to them accessing state support. UK government data states that 34% of the population received a type of state benefit in the three years up to 2021²¹. This means that we have higher rates of people accessing benefits than the UK average.

Additional demographic data

There was a diverse range of respondents, many with additional factors that could leave them more vulnerable to experiencing food insecurity.

An optional section of the survey enquired whether respondents identified with any of the following statements. Table 3 below summarises the responses to this section.

Table 3. Additional demographics summary

Self-identification category	%	Count
Low income	63	1173
I have or am experiencing mental health-related issues	33	613
I have been affected by domestic abuse	14	268
I am care experienced	9	172
I identify as having learning disabilities	8	148
I have/am experiencing difficulties associated with substance use	5	90
I identify as LGBTQIA	3	62
I am from a refugee or asylum-seeking background	3	51
I am former service personnel e.g., ex-army	2	50

²¹ Gov.UK, *DWP benefits statistics: August 2021*, Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dwp-benefits-statistics-august-2021/dwp-benefits-statistics-august-2021> [Accessed November 2023]



I have criminal convictions (current or recent past)	2	44
I have been affected by human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation	2	32
None of the above	20	374
Those who selected more than one option	38	715
(507 blanks)		N=1886

Organisation type and food support

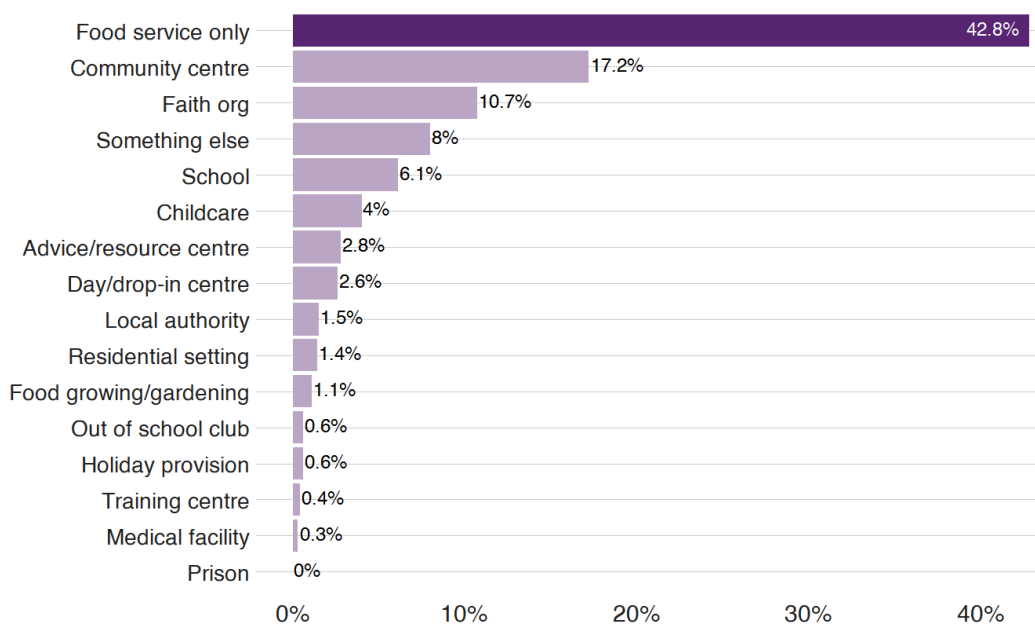
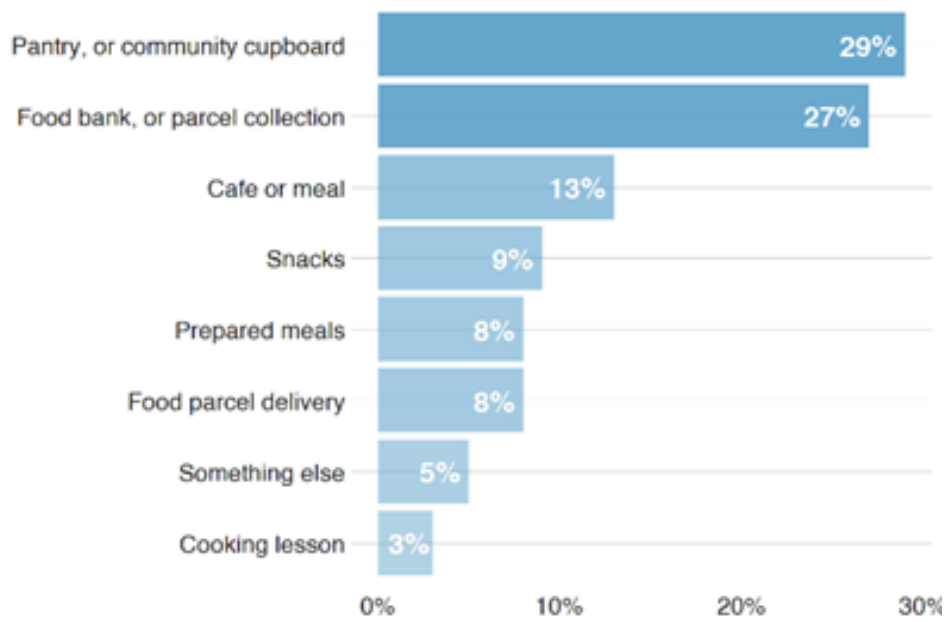


Fig. 9: Organisation type and food support

43% of respondents were accessing services that were set up to mainly provide food support only (n=2,589), as per figure 9 above; pantries and food banks were the most frequent services within this category. However, there was a range of responses, with many accessing support from community centres (17%) and faith organisations (11%).



Fig 10: Type of food support



The type of support respondents reported to have used was most likely to be either pantry or food bank support (n=2,528), as per figure 10 above. Under other, the most frequent responses were:

- food share (20 responses)
- food club (18 responses)

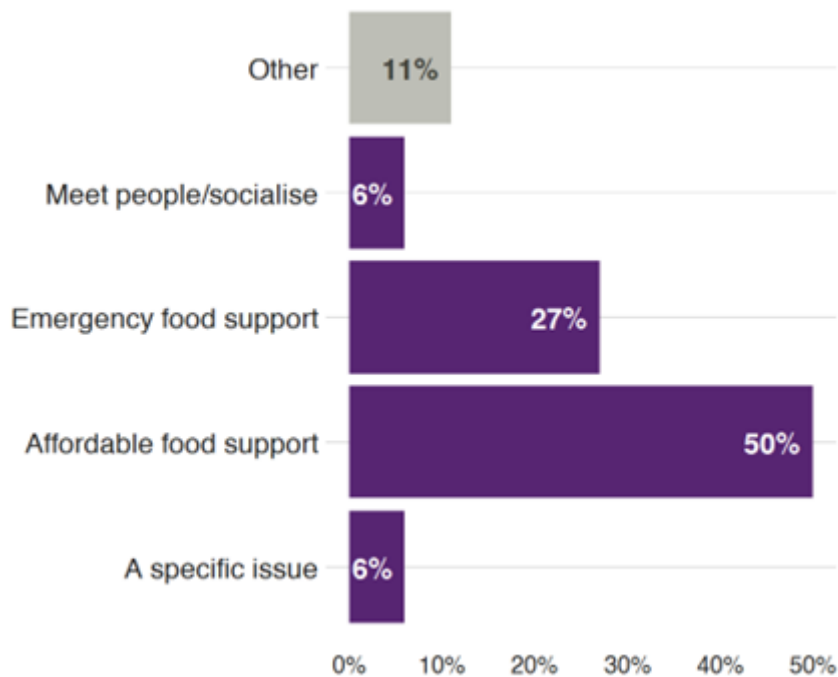
There is similarity with FareShare profile data²² as their findings suggests food banks/parcels as the most popular type of food, pantry/community cupboard/fridge as the second most frequent with onsite meals and snacks in third and fourth places.

Engagement with services

²² Ibid.



Fig. 11: Reason for first access



For half of respondents, the initial reason they accessed support was for regular, affordable food (n=2,561), as (see figure 11). This may reflect that more people are struggling as a result of high costs of living and need additional food support to ease financial pressures.

More than 1 in 4 people (27%) accessed the service for emergency food support. This type of support involves being in deeper financial insecurity. It often requires a referral from an external professional such as a social worker. Although the social aspect was not the most frequent response (bearing in mind the respondent could select one option only), qualitative comments highlighted its significance for a minority (explored below).

Under the other option, the most frequent response was related to preventing or disliking food waste (91 responses).

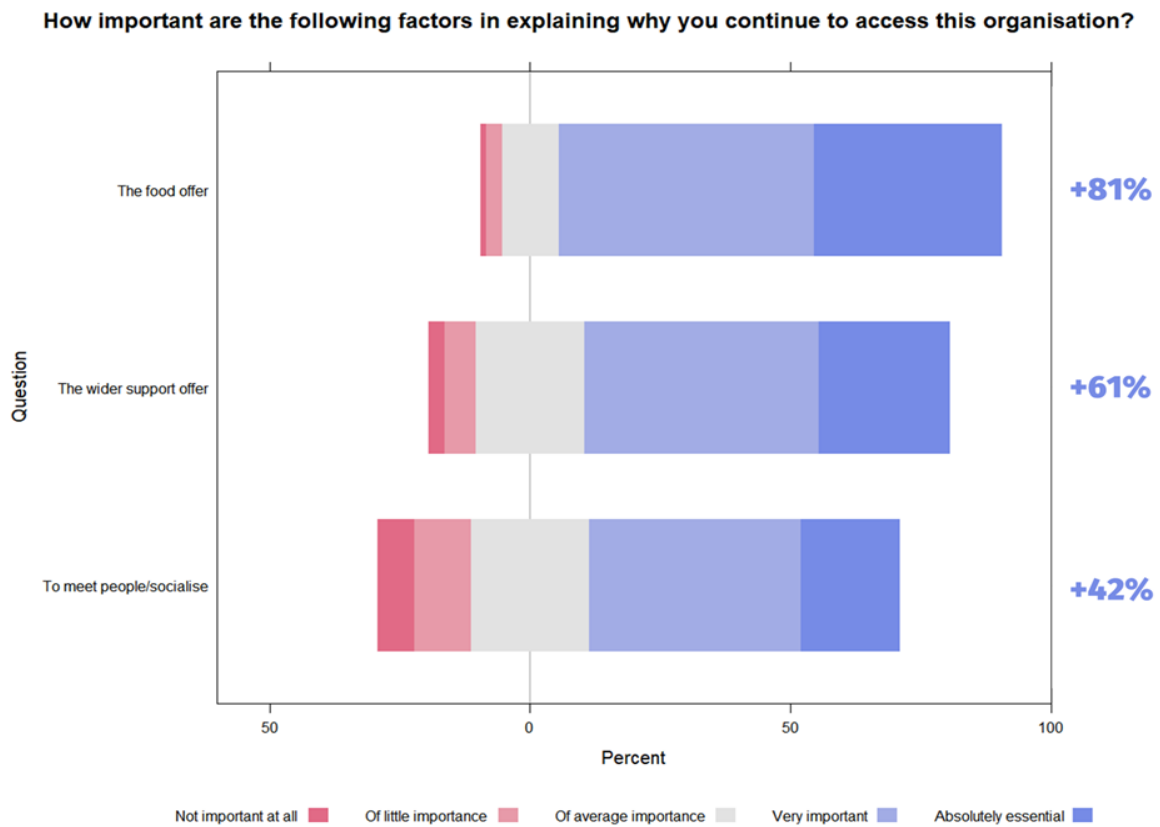
Continued engagement

When considering the reasons for continued engagement, and reported outcomes we have used a statistical approach called 'net score.' This is a calculation where the total of 'very important' and 'absolutely important' is added up and compared to the total 'of little importance' and 'not important at all'. 'Not relevant to me' and 'of average importance' were filtered out, therefore this approach removes passive responses. Please note that the summary dataset related to this question and the next can be found in [appendix one](#).

The wider support offer was also rated strongly, with a net score of +61% (n=2225). From reviewing responses, the wider support offer included advice from the sites, signposting or from visiting specialist providers such as debt or money management, mental health support.



Fig. 12: Reason why continue to access

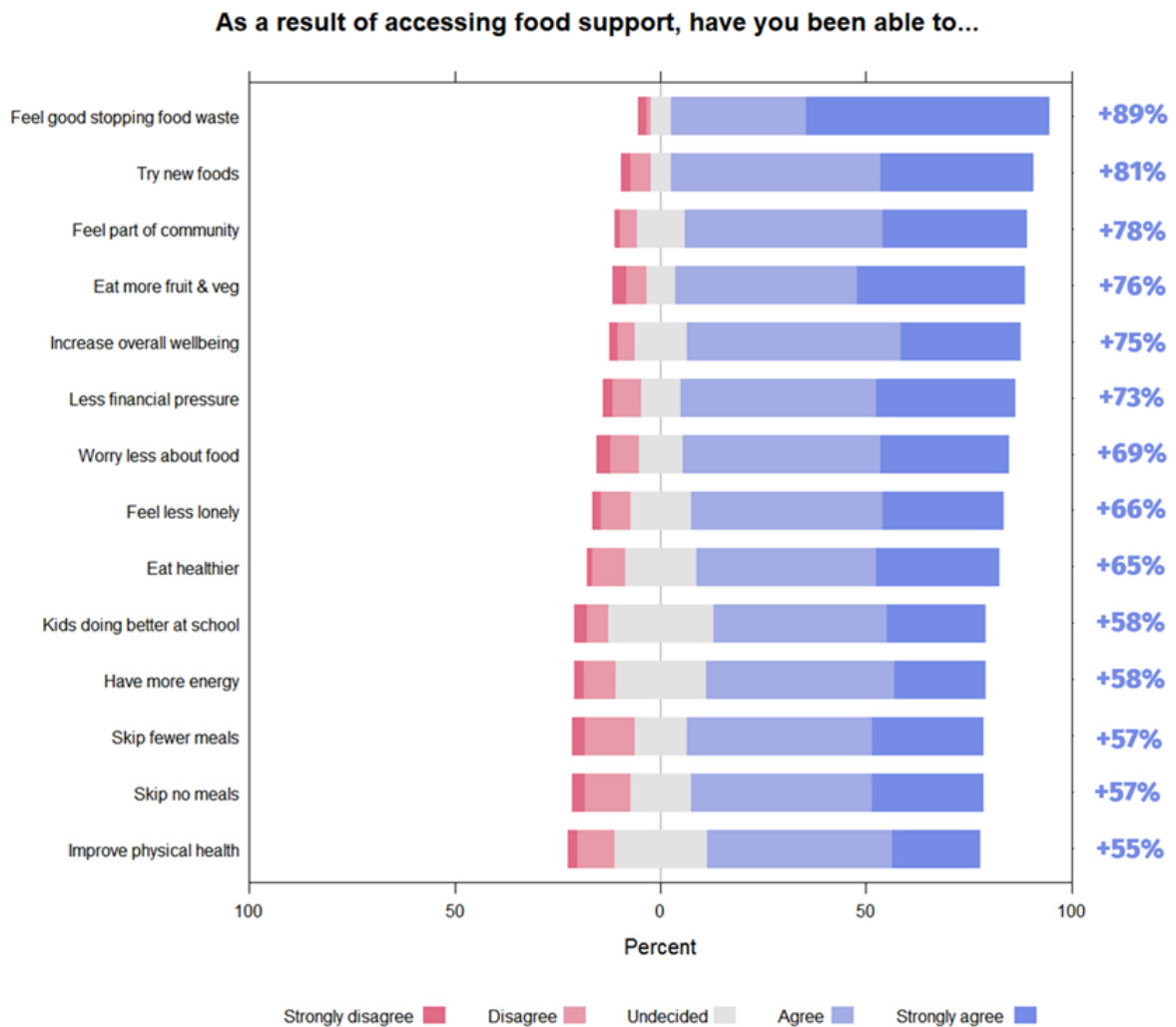


Overall, respondents rated the food offer as the most important factor explaining why they continued to access their organisations, with a net score of +81% (n=2,529). Scoring less than the other two factors, meeting people or socialising had a net score of +42% (n=2187).

Outcomes



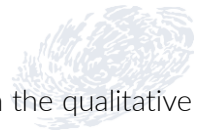
Fig 13: Outcomes as a result of accessing food support



Organised from greatest to least, we can see from figure 13 above the most common outcomes people who access support experience²³,

As a result of receiving redistributed food, a very high proportion of respondents agree they feel good about stopping food waste, with a net score of +89%. Trying new foods (+81%) and feeling part of the community(+78%) were also commonly reported. This is important as people facing food insecurity often are limited in what they buy and rely on cheaper staple items. Variety tends to lead to a better,

²³ 'Not relevant to me' was filtered out of this analysis to prevent bias. This means, for example, the outcome 'kids doing better at school' has not been biased by those with no children.



more nutritional diet, including wider consumption of fruit and vegetables (as found in the qualitative research and corroborated by external research²⁴).

Whilst the lowest reported outcome was 'Improve physical health', this was still a highly reported outcome, with a net score of +55%.

Additional positive outcomes

Among the open-ended survey responses, we explored if respondents experienced any additional outcomes.

- **Improved family relations:** Respondents consistently highlighted the strain that food insecurity placed on family life, resulting in increased stress. Accessing food support was frequently mentioned as a means of alleviating some of this. For example, one respondent mentioned that the: **"Family happiness index increased"** (FareShare Go West of England). This suggests that addressing food insecurity not only has a direct positive impact on individuals but also extends to improving family relations and overall well-being.
- **Positive effects on children:** Furthermore, it is worth exploring the impact of food support on children. We specifically tested the statement 'my kids doing better at school' as a result of accessing food support and found a positive score, signifying that food supports impacts on educational attainment. Beyond this, the ability to choose from a variety of food options aides a smoother weaning experience and contributed to increased health and wellbeing for child and adult. Additionally, the reduced financial pressure on families, as highlighted above, appears to lead to improved family life for those facing food insecurity, which, in turn, positively affect children.
- **Becoming volunteers and contributing back:** there were several mentions of those accessing the food support becoming volunteers and feeling like they were able to contribute back to the community. This had many positive benefits including improved wellbeing. One example was of a person accessing food support who ran, as a volunteer, cooking classes for others through their site. The significance of reciprocity is explored further in the deep dive sites.
- **Confidence in the kitchen:** Some respondents mentioned newfound culinary confidence. They learned to cook new and different meals with ingredients they hadn't used before,

²⁴ Scheelbeek P, Green R, Papier K, et al (2020)

Health impacts and environmental footprints of diets that meet the Eatwell Guide recommendations: analyses of multiple UK studies, BMJ Open Available at: <https://bmjopen.bmj.com/content/10/8/e037554> [Accessed 15 November 2023]



including from recipes exchanged with others or suggested by staff/volunteers. This contributed to their sense of empowerment.

“Trying new things and becoming more creative with meals!” (FareShare regional centre, East of England)

“Trying different foods and adapting recipes to use up all the random fresh food it has become a very worthwhile challenge and lots of fun getting everyone involved” (FareShare Go, Midlands)

Most meaningful outcomes

We wanted to hear directly from respondents regarding which of the outcomes they found most meaningful. We achieved this through an open-ended question. Interestingly, the outcomes here were similar to the most helpful aspects of support (reported below). There were 1,558 responses to this question.

It is important to acknowledge the intricate interplay within this section (as well as the most helpful section) as the responses were closely related. For instance, increased access to food was closely linked to increased financial savings. This, in turn, had a significant impact on improved mental well-being. Likewise, the support accessed was also closely tied to the sense of community connectedness experienced by respondents. The support, frequently mentioned, was an enabler of these outcomes. Therefore, it is perhaps more meaningful to view these all as intricately linked.

We used a combination of auto coding (lexical searches) and manual coding to explore the open-ended survey responses. The lexical count is included to evidence strength of response.

Enhanced food accessibility and diversity

Food emerged as the most significant outcome for the respondents. It was mentioned 683 times under this open-ended question area. The outcomes related to food are inter-related and included:

That the food is free/affordable

Several participants mentioned they struggled to afford and therefore to access good quality of food. They also struggled to pay bills and food shopping and had to choose between the two. Food

support helped offset this. They also appreciated being given meals either at their service or for cooking at home.

“Food prices have gone through the roof in recent years and food inflation is still very high. As pensioners we are very grateful for this facility because it helps to offset exorbitant food price hikes.”

(FareShare Go Manchester)

“I would have had to restrict my diet to pay for other household essentials i.e., electricity and water bills.” (FareShare Go, Sussex)

In the closed survey responses, the food being free was not among the strongest aspects. However, it was a strong and frequent response in the open-ended responses. It may be that as the survey had quite a high number of respondents who did not consider themselves as low income, this affected this score.

Accessibility of food

The accessibility of the food services, whether locally or through delivery, was mentioned as a key factor. Special mention was made of services offering free delivery to accommodate those without transportation, including homeless people and older people.

“My local pantry offer me free delivery - I am homeless and have no transport - the flexibility offered is beneficial to me.” (FareShare regional centre, South Wales)


New food exploration

Respondents mentioned they now had new opportunities to try diverse foods that they wouldn't normally afford. Brands like Waitrose and Hambleton Bakery were cited as sources of exciting food experiences. They appreciated the variety and described trying new fruit and vegetables that they might not typically pick up as their budgets were limited.

“More vegetables in the home so better nutrition. Adults (2) able to eat the vegetable meals with kids without worrying we can still give kids good food every day”. (FareShare Go, Midlands)

Improved nutrition

Many people reported that they were eating better food as a result of accessing food support. A key part of this was fresh fruit and vegetables but also more variety and eating seasonally.



“(I am) using less take aways, helping me to budget my finances better, using ingredients and preparing meals myself, healthier diet. Some days I would not have had anything to eat for myself and my family. I am eating different kinds of food, I am eating more fruit and vegetables, I am aware of using seasonal products and making more healthier choices.” (FareShare Go, Northern Ireland)

Better able to feed family

In the context of the ‘food’ category, another significant area that surfaced was the **impact on families**. Being better able to feed/support family had 57 mentions. Phrases like "excellent source for my family" and children's excitement upon receiving food were highlighted. Throughout the open-ended responses across the survey, the profound stress experienced by parents who were not sure if they would be able to feed their children was notable. For example:

“I became calmer knowing that we have food, and my child will not go hungry.” (FareShare Go, Sussex)

“Being able to feed my child rather than go without which then makes my mental health spiral.” (FareShare Go, Greater Manchester)

“I am more mentally stable that my family is not too pressured on food.” (FareShare regional centre, Yorkshire, Barnsley)

More generally, the ripple positive effect on well-being and health as a result of accessing the food support was a strong response. Many respondents reported heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and worry due to food insecurity. Accessing food support helped relieve their anxiety. As above under outcomes, there were additional positive benefits for families.

“Financial pressure on food purchase has reduced. I get to meet friendly faces each week and share a cuppa. I would be mentally drained from worrying about shopping for food for my family.” (FareShare regional centre, Yorkshire, Barnsley)

“They always listen to me when I need to talk. I am less depressed and get up to come out to collect the food for our family. I would have become very ill (without the food support) + my children would be hungry again - school holidays would be a nightmare. My husband is less stressed as well and we can get on better. We have also started to sort out some of our debts.” (FareShare Go, Greater Manchester)



Increased financial savings

The theme of financial savings was notably prevalent among the respondents. A lexical search found a total of 559 related mentions. For individuals facing financial insecurity, the provision of food support served as a vital lifeline, easing the considerable financial strain they had been enduring.

These financial benefits encompassed various aspects, including:

- *Help with bills and budgeting*: Respondents noted that the money saved from accessing food support could be redirected towards covering other bills or essential expenses, such as school clothing.
- *Preventing further debt*: The food support helped individuals avoid mounting debt, providing some relief from this burden.
- *Reducing the stress from rising food prices*: Respondents mentioned that the support allowed them to cope with some of the stress of rising food prices by allowing them to make smaller, more manageable supermarket purchases.

Some typical quotes included:

“I no longer worry about food bills. Most of my shopping can be done at the centre.” (FareShare regional centre, Kent)

“Less debt and better budgeting each week.” (FareShare regional centre, Glasgow and the West of Scotland)

A longer quote exemplifies the challenges of a disabled respondent:

“The most important change in my life is having a decent meal a day. I no longer have to skip a day or two because my benefits have had to be spent on electricity to charge my wheelchair. I’m actually healthier and slowly getting healthier and stronger. Even my GP has noticed a change.

I was pretty desperate when I first visited [my local food service]. I was being mentally affected and was skipping most meals to the point where at its worst, I probably had one slice of bread and margarine a day and only ate a hot meal every five days. My social worker was becoming concerned.

I did however manage to hide this quite well because I didn’t want people to think I was begging. I now have a purpose, a sense of worth. Something I didn’t have before. I can’t thank [the organisation] enough” (FareShare Go, Sussex)



Whilst we did not ask a direct question in the survey about the impact of the current high cost of living in the UK, there were several comments in the open-ended survey responses related to this. There were examples of people who do not qualify for benefits who were in work and struggling and referencing the relatively high number of survey respondents who are in work, not claiming any government support but still need to access food support. For instance:

“The fact that there's no eligibility criteria are of the biggest importance. Due to my recent circumstances, I don't qualify for benefits, yet I find myself unable to afford food, or risk facing homelessness if I budget differently as most of my salary goes to living costs, which were affordable pre-cost of living crisis and certain personal circumstances. I found myself absolutely desperate trying to find dropped coins etc. to buy something to eat... Finding this service, without having to waste my GPs time on a foodbank referral (when they hardly have time to attend to people's medical needs), has truly saved me.” (FareShare Go, South Midlands)

“I had £60/week housekeeping to pay for clothes, travel (took up £26/week), food and socialising so I was in a hopeless mess even though I was working part-time. I was so relieved when they said, "Pop in we can help you". I received 4 weekly food parcels to get me back on my feet.” (FareShare Go, Midlands)

Improved mental health

The third most frequent area closely tied in to the two above outcomes was improved mental health. Related lexical searches found 537 mentions, similar to the financial savings outcome. As a result of being able to access food and the financial savings, survey respondents reported less worry and stress. The strongly expressed relief that they could support their families now.

“I am less stress(ed) now; I was on antidepressant medication before.” (FareShare Go, London)

“I am less depressed and get up to come out to collect the food for our family.” (FareShare Go, Greater Manchester)

“I experience an uplifting spirit, I have where to look up to because there is hope.” (FareShare Go, Glasgow & The West of Scotland)

“(Most important change?) (My) mental health - (I am) starting to feel back to be(ing) part of a community again ...” (FareShare Go, Kent)



More access to support

Another recurring theme (with 397 mentions) was how invaluable respondents found the support offer. At the sites, the staff and volunteers create a supportive and welcoming environment. As a result, those accessing the sites felt comfortable asking for help and interacting with other users and staff. The emotional support played a central role in creating a sense of belonging and improved wellbeing. Additionally, in sites where there was a formal support offer, respondents appreciated being able to access an additional support offer, beyond the food offer.

“Great support from them. Especially when I found out I was diabetic they asked me what foods would be better for my diet and then provided them on the shelves.” (FareShare Go, North East)

“I am able to get support and someone to talk to when needed.” (FareShare regional centre, South Wales)

“The food is free, and I get support on other issues.” (FareShare Go, Northern Ireland)

Building community connectedness

Many respondents also emphasised the impact on their sense of community, feelings of belonging, and the formation of new friendships, all contributing to a strong sense of camaraderie stemming from accessing food support (236 related mentions). It is evident that the sites serve as places beyond where people access food; they are community hubs that allow people to come together and to support each other (between staff, volunteers and individual to individual).

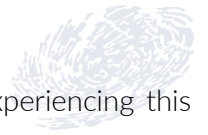
“I needed a place I can call home and people I can connect with. Then they accepted me”
(FareShare Go, Glasgow & The West of Scotland)

“I feel more valued as a member of my community, everyone is so welcoming.” (FareShare Go, Lancashire & Cumbria)

“Help meeting people going through hardship not feeling alone.” (FareShare Go, Yorkshire)

Type of organisation and outcomes

We wanted to understand whether the type of organisation from which respondents received food had any impact on the outcomes they experienced. The following results are statistically significant.



In terms of feeling part of a community, respondents were more likely to report experiencing this outcome if they sought support from a *community centre* (net score of +96%), accessed a *food only service* (+92%) or a *faith organisation* (+88%). Perhaps less surprising are the findings that community centres and faith organisations had a strong effect on feeling part of a community, but the food only service only having such a strong effect may be less expected. This corresponds to the qualitative data from our third deep dive site where social connectedness was very strong despite having no formal support beyond the food offer (see the Midlands and Littlehampton examples below).

Across other outcomes, *faith organisations* consistently reported higher outcomes compared to other groups. However, these differences were not always statistically significant, meaning that some of these correlations may be less strong.


For respondents who have sought help from a *community centre*, they were much more likely to report feeling good about stopping food going to waste, with a very high net score of +95%. Similarly, respondents who have sought help from *school* had a net score of +97% for this outcome.

Respondents who had sought support from a *faith organisation* were more likely to report that they had tried new foods, with a net score of +90%.

We also found that those accessing family support (a combination of childcare, school and out-of-school clubs) scored less well in the outcomes than other non-family centred provision. It may be that families experience deeper challenges and food insecurity than others.

In addition to this analysis, we examined outcomes against organisation type and present this in table 4 below. Please note that these results are not statistically significant – the difference between the scores simply is not that large. We use only the agreement scores here, i.e. the percentage of people who selected strongly agree or agree rather than net scores). Further, certain types of organisations were excluded as the response rates were too low (<100) to be able to compare. Scores above 75% are highlighted. This analysis corroborates the above points regarding certain types of organisations having stronger outcomes, including feeling part of a community and the finding that feeling good stopping food going to waste is something felt across the board. They also corroborate the cross tabulation completed below in relation to children's services and outcomes (figure 14). To summarise **community centres, faith organisations and food service only have the strongest scores regarding reduced financial pressure and overall wellbeing.**

Table 4. Agreement scores per organisation type



Organisation type	Eat healthier	Eat more fruit & veg	Try new foods	Skip no meals	Skip fewer meals	Have more energy	Less financial pressure	Kids doing better at school	Feel good stopping waste	Feel part of community	Improved physical health	Feel less lonely	Worry less about food	Overall wellbeing increased
Advice/resource centre	Response rate too low													
Childcare	63	74	78	49	52	47	66	55	79	63	36	48	51	52
Community centre	71	84	88	59	64	63	81	38	93	85	61	71	75	78
Day/drop-in centre	Response rate too low													
Faith org	64	78	87	61	66	61	78	24	90	79	52	69	72	75
Food growing/gardening	Response rate too low													
Food service only	70	85	86	62	65	63	79	35	93	80	57	64	74	77
Holiday provision	Response rate too low													
Local authority	Response rate too low													
Medical facility	Response rate too low													
Out of school club	Response rate too low													
Residential setting	Response rate too low													
School	58	78	77	52	56	49	66	53	86	58	49	45	64	61
Training centre	Response rate too low													



Additional analysis: the experience of those accessing family support and outcomes²⁵

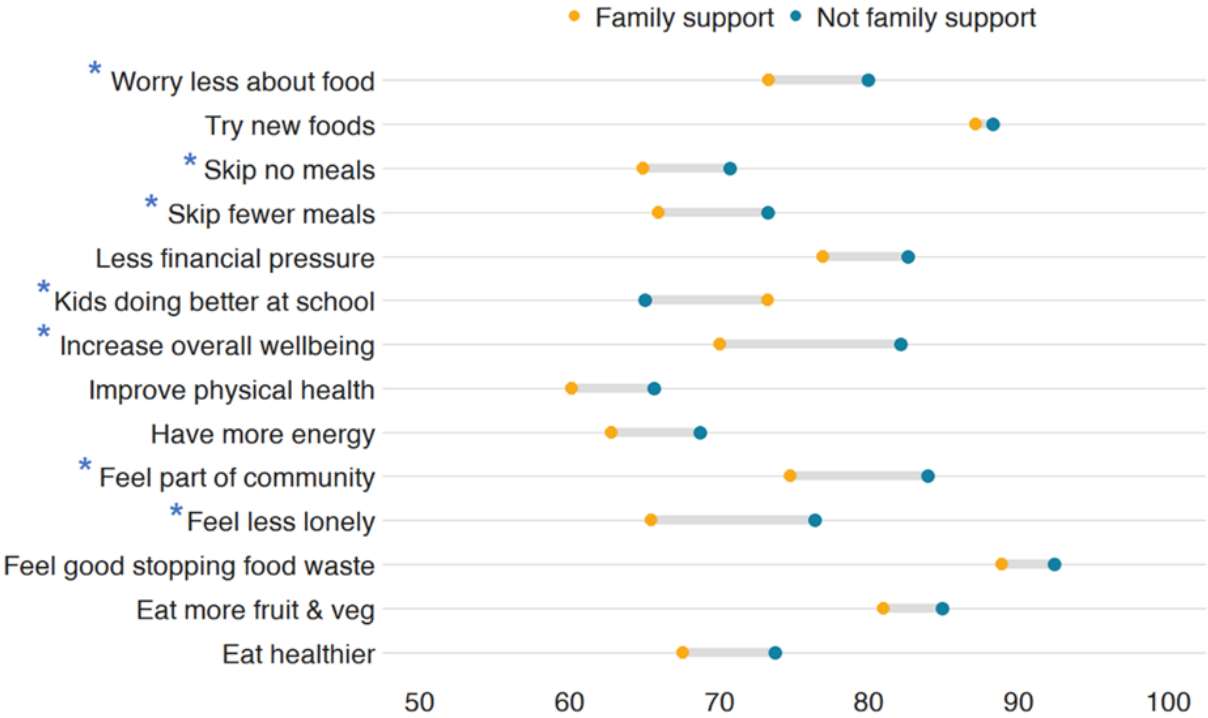


Fig. 14: Comparison between outcomes for those accessing family support and those who do not

'Family support' was compared to those accessing other services, as per figure 14 above. We coded those who had sought support for childcare, school, or 'out of school club' as family support.

Across many indicators, those who were *not* seeking family support reported greater outcomes in worrying less about food, skipping no or fewer meals, increasing overall wellbeing, feeling part of a community, and feeling less lonely.

The only outcome which those who had sought family support scored higher (in comparison to those not accessing family support) was for the 'kids doing better at school' outcome – however, this difference is not as large as may be expected. One explanation may be that families accessing family support are experiencing more complex needs and life circumstances from the outset and therefore

²⁵ Outcomes with a blue asterisk (*) in the following figures are statistically significant at the $p < 0.05$ threshold. Simply put, a result that is statistically significant means that the differences between groups is unlikely to have occurred simply by chance. A p-value of $p = 0.05$, means that there is a 95% probability that we could not have achieved this result purely by chance.



they experience less strong change related to food support. Additional challenges and worries faced by families emerged strongly in the qualitative responses.

“My whole family would have had to skip meals, not just me.” (FareShare Go, Sussex)

What changes for whom

As may be anticipated outcomes for people also vary by their circumstances. The findings of our research shed light on how people experience outcomes:

- Disabled individuals often tend to report less strong outcomes compared to their non-disabled counterparts.
- Older individuals demonstrate higher net scores in terms of reduced meal skipping and feeling good about preventing food waste, in contrast to their younger counterparts who fare better in terms of energy and overall health.
- Global majority respondents consistently experience higher net scores than their White British counterparts, emphasising the significance of recognising and valuing diversity within the charity and community organisations.
- Individuals claiming welfare benefits appear to be less likely to report improvements in physical health and a sense of community, and more generally report lower outcome scores.
- Unemployed people report some additional benefits including that they were more likely to report skipping fewer meals, to see their kids doing better at school, and to be eating more healthily as a result of their food support.

These findings highlight that people do not experience outcomes in the same way. Some groups, such as disabled individuals and those claiming welfare, may require additional support to achieve more equitable outcomes.

The blue asterisks in the tables throughout this section indicate outcomes where a statistically significant difference was found.



Age and outcomes

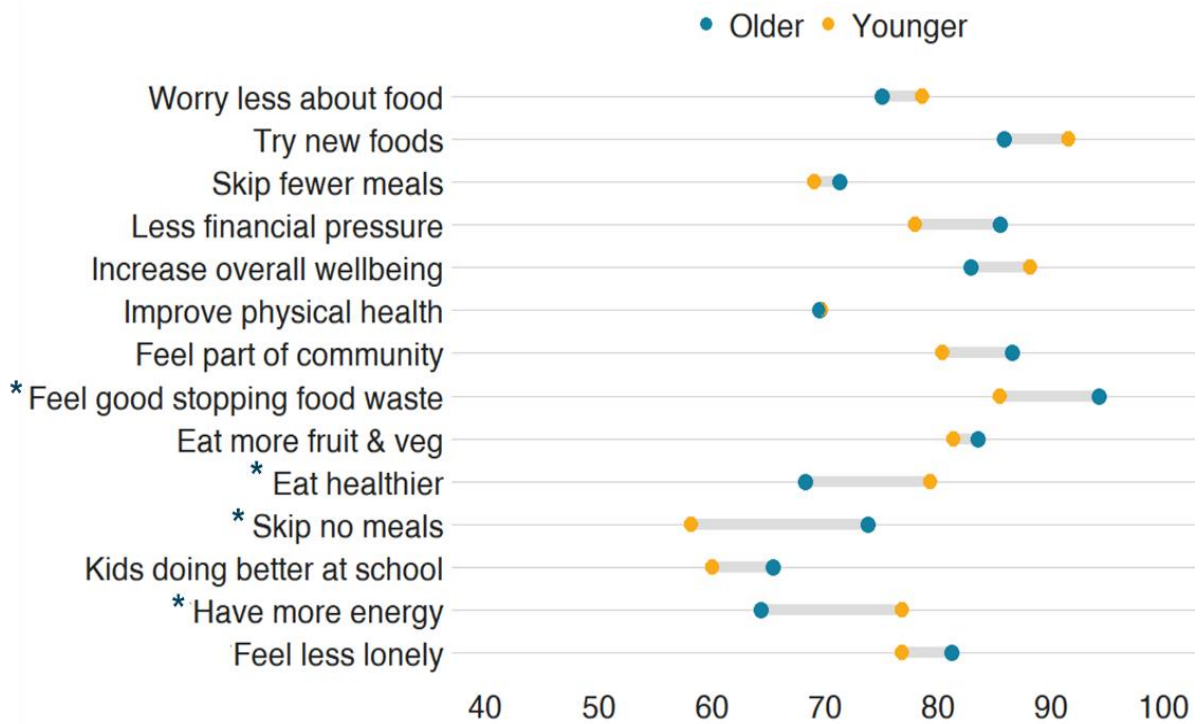


Fig. 15: Outcomes comparison between older and younger respondents

Respondents were recoded into older (65+) and younger (18 to 34).

Older people report stronger outcomes on many factors but particularly on feeling good about stopping food going to waste and skipping no meals. Younger people reported they ate more healthily and had more energy (see figure 15). Although statistically significant, these differences are relatively minor.



Ethnicity and outcomes

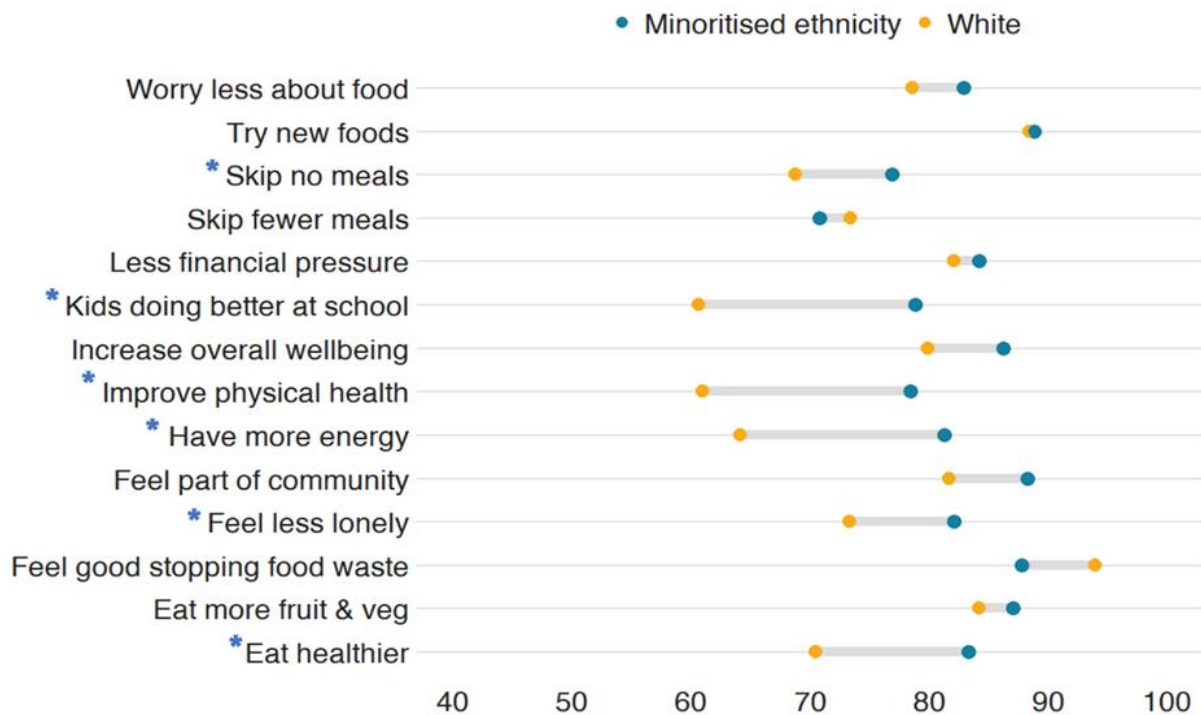


Fig. 16: Outcomes comparison between ethnic minorities (global majority) and White British

There are some differences between white and global majority respondents' perceptions of outcomes. Where these are statistically significant, the outcomes are stronger for global majority respondents.

Those from a global majority background reported being less likely to have to skip meals, and more likely to see their kids doing better in school, have improved physical health, have more energy, feel less lonely, and eat more healthily as a result of accessing food than White British respondents.



Children and outcomes

There were no statistically significant correlations between whether a respondent has child(ren) or not, and the outcomes they experience.

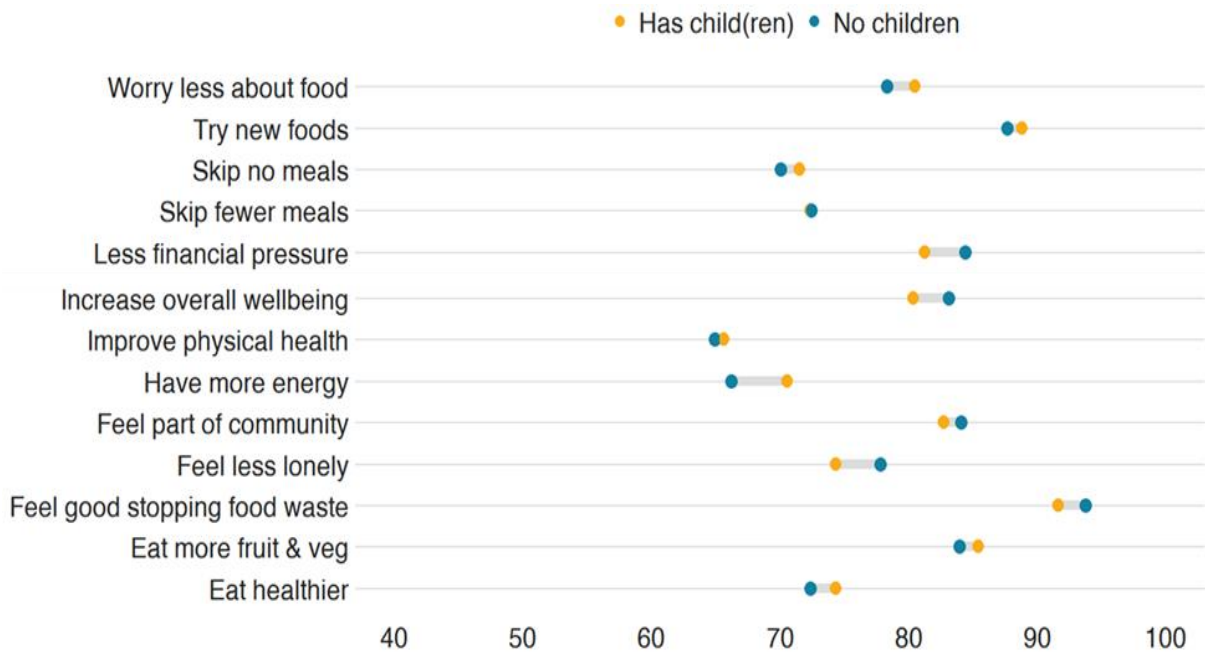


Fig. 17: Outcomes comparison between those with children and those without

There are some differences, for example if you have children, you worry less about food after receiving food support and are likely to skip fewer meals and conversely, those without children report slightly higher levels of reduced financial concern, improved wellbeing and reduced loneliness, but the difference is slight.

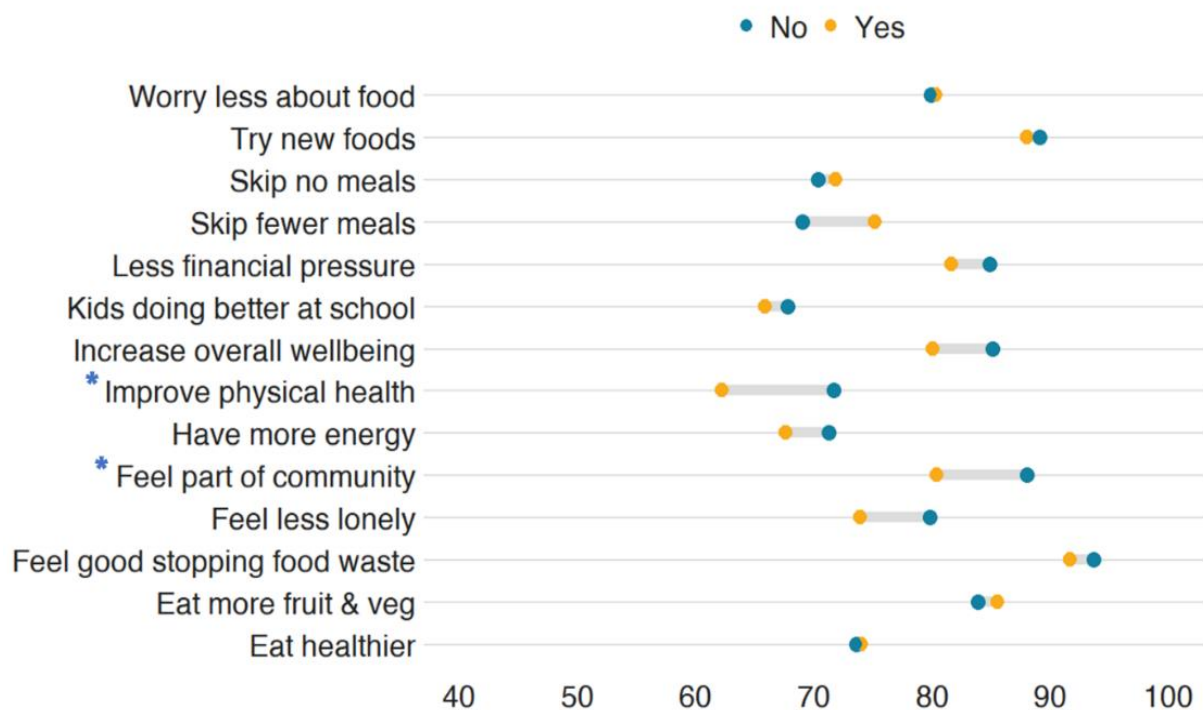
The family support section above suggests a slightly different picture (those accessing family support have consistently lower outcomes scores). The worries and relief of families emerges strongly in the open-ended responses.



Welfare benefits and outcomes

Fig. 18: Outcomes comparison between those accessing welfare benefits and those who do not

Those who are claiming welfare are less likely to have seen improvements to their physical health, and less likely to feel part of a community. Those accessing welfare tend to have lower scores, although the difference is slight in most areas.





Working status and outcomes

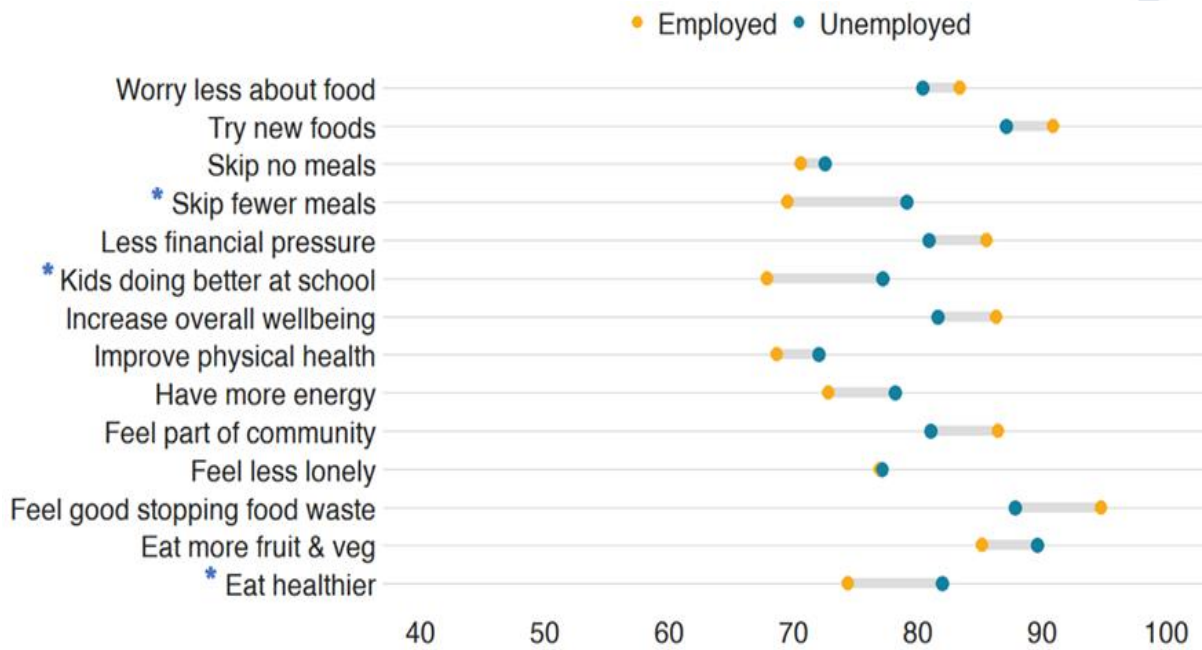


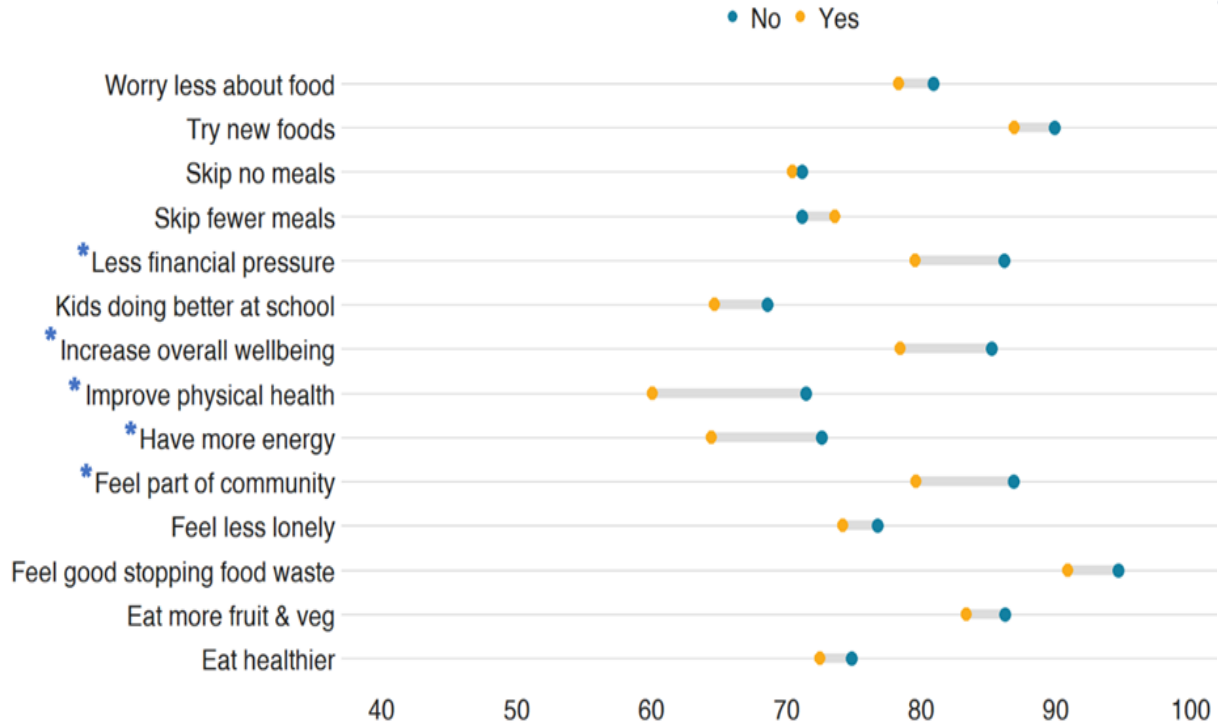
Fig. 19: Outcomes comparison between those employed and unemployed

Those who are unemployed were more likely to report skipping fewer meals, to see their kids doing better at school, and to be eating more healthily as a result of their food support, as per figure 19 above.

Caring responsibilities and outcomes



Fig. 20: Outcomes comparison those with caring responsibilities and those who do not



There are no statistically significant differences between whether a respondent has caring responsibilities (yes) and differences in outcomes. In most outcome areas, those who do not have additional caring responsibilities score higher, but the difference is marginal.

Disability and outcomes

There are a number of differences between respondents who identify as having a disability (yes) and not (no).

This exclusively comes to the detriment of those *with a* disability, who are less likely to report having alleviated financial pressures, improvements in overall wellbeing or physical health, to report having more energy, or feeling part of a community as a result of accessing food support.

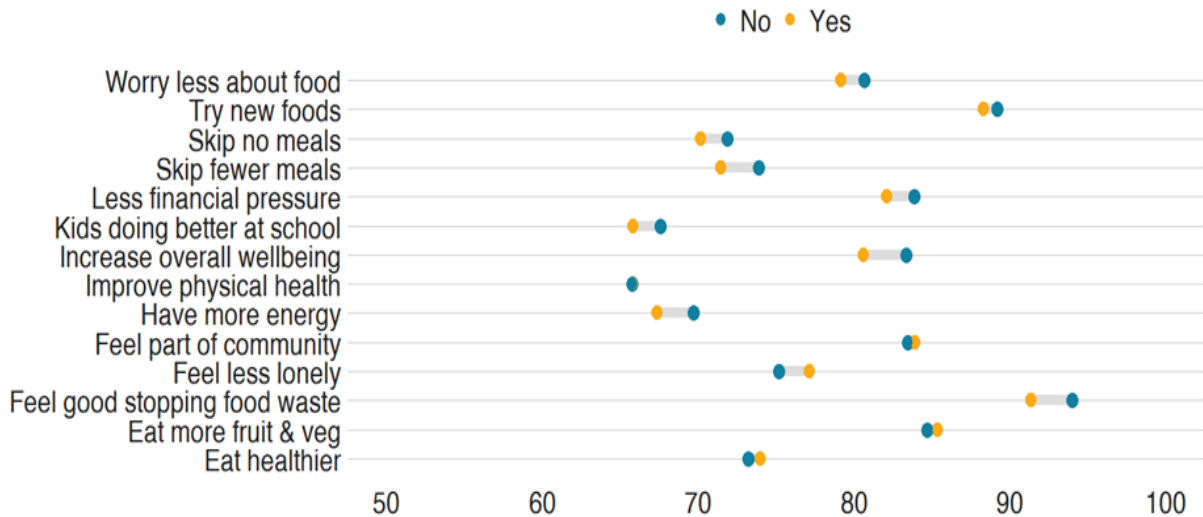


Fig. 21: Outcomes comparison between disabled respondents and those not disabled

Enablers: Most important factors of a service

Respondents were asked which elements of the service were most important to them. Food support being in “a place people know and trust” (+85%), “preventing food waste” (+84%) and “convenience” (+84%) were the most frequent responses, as per figure 22 below.

The most helpful aspect of support (under the open-ended question) involved accessing the food. As mentioned above under most meaningful outcomes, it was challenging to try and disentangle the



following section as the responses were all so closely related. It is perhaps more meaningful to view these all as closely connected.

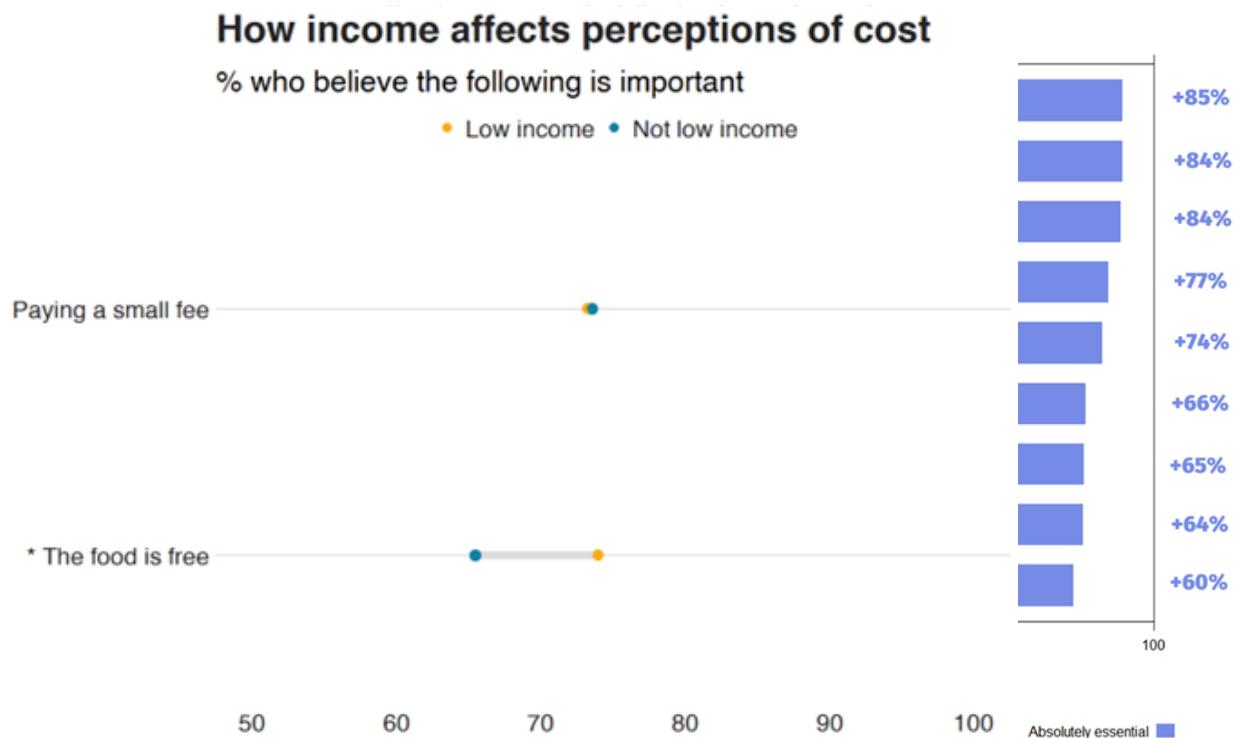


Fig. 22: Most important aspects of the service

All statements had strong scores in terms of high net scores. A very small proportion of respondents said that listed factors were of little or no importance.

The most important factors, according to respondents, were food support being offered at a place they know and trust, and the food otherwise going to waste. These options saw net scores of +85% and +84%, respectively. Sample quotes from among the survey respondent corroborating the most helpful aspect of the support for them:

“The fact it is locally run by local people who know the area and the problems local people face.”

(FareShare Go, Yorkshire)

“That it nearby as I can’t drive” (FareShare regional centre, Kent)

“Ready accessibility of the service [is the most helpful aspect for me]” (FareShare regional centre, London)

“The centre sometimes delivers the food parcels to my doorstep. I find this very convenient especially times I am unable to go out” (FareShare Go, Sussex)

“Local and affordable” (FareShare Go, Greater Manchester)



Fig. 23: How income affects perceptions of costs (free vs a small fee)

Interestingly, the food being free was rated the least important factor, as per figure 23 above. However, the majority still reported believing this to be important, reflected by a net score of +60%. Those describing themselves as being of a low income were more likely to say that the food being free was important. This is statistically significant ($p = 0.012$).

However, interestingly, 'paying a small fee makes me feel like I am contributing.' was seen as equally important between those who are low income, and those who are not. We ran some additional analysis to explore this further. Among those who claimed welfare ($n=943$), 74% said it was 'essential' or 'very important' that a fee is involved. 4% said it was of 'little' or 'no' importance. Among those who are unemployed ($n=279$), the figures were 71% and 10%, respectively. For comparison, we also combining respondents who identified as unemployed, full- time informal carers, long-term sick/disabled, or looking after the home ($n=734$). Among these, the figures were 71% and 7%, respectively. Therefore, it is evident that paying a small fee is viewed as valuable in terms of feeling like the person is contributing.

Whilst the different types of food offer did not reveal any significant differences in reported outcomes of respondents the nature of the support provided was an important theme. Consistent with a person centred and empathic approach respondents identified a number of factors which they perceived as being important in the services approach. These include:

- Supportive staff and volunteers.
- Signposting to different support offers.
- Advice including to IT, recreational and financial advice.
- Financial Advice.
- Pastoral Care.

Expanding on supportive elements: reduced stigma

In addition to the insights gained from the open-ended question about the most helpful aspect of support, our survey uncovered some noteworthy responses that may shed light on how to mitigate the stigma often associated with accessing food support.



Removal of eligibility criteria/universal access: Several respondents highlighted that not having eligibility criteria played a pivotal role in reducing stigma. By allowing individuals to access support whenever they needed it, without the requirement of external referrals, it removed any potential embarrassment. For example:

"It removes a lot of the stigma attached to food bank use, so you don't have to feel embarrassed to use it. Some people can judge you when using it." (FareShare Go, Tayside and Fife)

"Also, making it available to everyone helps with anxiety. I can't visit the food bank as I feel so guilty and anxious but the idea of going to xx food cupboard where you're almost helping reduce food waste and anyone can queue, helps my mood immensely." (FareShare Go, Sussex)

Value and dignity: Many participants expressed a deep sense of feeling valued, supported, and treated with dignity and respect by volunteers and staff at these support sites. They found that this approach shifted their perception from one of shame to one of empowerment. Quotes such as "**To feel a sense of myself as a person, not a charity case**" and "**It's not just food; it's family, and I feel cared for alone in this country - no longer alone!**" (FareShare regional centre, East of England) illustrate how such treatment positively impacts individuals' self-esteem and self-worth.

Without access to the food support

We explored what respondents thought would happen were they not able to access food support (n=1,804). The responses were striking:

- **Financial hardship/struggle:** Financial difficulties were a recurring theme, with individuals expressing that they would not have enough money to cover essential expenses, including bills and food. This financial strain would result in increased debt (691 mentions).
- **Increased food poverty:** Many respondents felt they would have access to less food, fewer meals, that they would have to resort to cutting back, skipping meals and ultimately, going hungry (606 mentions)
- **Eating less well:** Respondents also noted that they would not be able to eat as well or without as much choice. They noted they would access less fresh produce. They felt their health would reduce (158 mentions).
- **Deteriorating mental health:** Respondents emphasised that their mental health would worsen, with increased stress, anxiety, and worry. Respondents noted in their free-text responses that pre-existing conditions, such as General Anxiety Disorder and PTSD, would be further aggravated in the absence of support (73 mentions).



Two example quotes, including one longer explanation were:

“I would have suffered a lot worse with my mental health if I didn’t get the support, I get from the centre all the staff and helpers go above and beyond to help everyone.” (FareShare Go, Greater Manchester)

“The free food helps me enormously with my mental health challenges which include General Anxiety Disorder and PTSD – as the service relieves my anxiety enormously and helps with forgetting previous traumas for which I am very grateful. I may have died – this feels like life and death to me. I remain incredibly grateful to all the volunteers and those that donate which enables this service to exist and continue. The food bank has been a life changer for me, and I have recently managed to get part-time work (because I am less stressed) and my work now includes helping others with addiction problems - so this positive ripple effect is now helping others too - and that is incredibly fulfilling for me. I truly believe this service of food support is part of saving my life - and I mean that literally. Thank you to all involved!” (FareShare Go, Sussex)

Throughout, these issues were raised as a particular concern for families (151 mentions).

“There would definitely be times when I had no food for my family.” (FareShare Go, Tayside and Fife)

“The fear of not being able to provide for my family gave me depression.” (FareShare Go, London)

One respondent expressed that, without this support, they might have resorted to desperate measures like shoplifting and begging.



Chapter four: deep dive sites

This chapter presents the findings of the qualitative exploration of the views of people accessing food in the three charities that were selected as 'deep dive sites'. The chapter is divided by site, with the first one being in an urban area of high deprivation in Scotland, the second one being a rural site comprising three food hubs in the Midland area of England, and the third one being an urban area in the south of England.

Site 1: Edinburgh

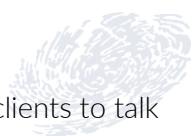
Context, background and observations

The Edinburgh site is described as a Foodbank. It is based in Granton/Pilton of Edinburgh within the Granton Baptist Church which is in an area within the 3rd Decile of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation.²⁶ The areas in walking distance of the church are within the most deprived 10 to 20% of the population in Scotland²⁶. It is run and operated by the Edinburgh Mission and the Granton Baptist Church. There is one Church Deacon and a Community and Youth Worker present during the foodbank's hours of operation, and both interact with, and provide support to people who come into the foodbank. There are also volunteers, who are church members, who come in to provide social support to those who are attending the foodbank.

The foodbank takes referrals from a variety of sources and the referrals are managed through the Edinburgh mission system which directs people to the closest foodbank to them. The system allows for a list of people to be printed out on the day to check who has received a referral. The usual number of referrals a person can have is 6 before they have to wait several months to access the foodbank again. However, the team makes exceptions for those in extenuating circumstances such as not having access to public funds or other sources of funds. Many people who access the foodbank are experiencing language barriers. When people arrive, they get assigned a number on the waiting list based on their arrival time and the staff will support them in order.

While the clients wait, they are able to have tea/coffee or other drink and biscuits. In that time, they are also able to access the other services on the premises. During the site visit, researchers observed that staff and volunteers were quick to engage with people and appeared to know a few of the

²⁶ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Webpage. Available at: <https://simd.scot/#/simd2020/BTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/>. Last accessed: 10/11/2023



people fairly well entering into conversations with them easily. There were spaces for clients to talk to each other, and for staff/volunteers to sit with people. There were also chairs on the edge of the room, and the researchers reflected that this area may be helpful for those who feel less comfortable interacting socially or being in the centre of the room. In another area, there was a corner for children, with play mats and toys. Unless someone declared a preference to not want to engage with people, the clients were never left alone and always had someone to speak with.

The volunteers packing the food parcels were observed to be approaching each client with a shopping list to ask them about the type of goods they would like to receive, their preferences and dislikes. We noted during the observations, and during conversations with staff, that clients can declare dietary requirements at the point of referral but this, along with the facilities (i.e. cooker, microwave, fridge) the person has access to, is checked upon arrival to make sure that there are no allergies or dislikes. On request the service also provides cleaning and hygiene products and other household items. The service provides limited sanitary products as those are accessible for free in other places.

The service also hosts a citizens advice bureaux worker, and a housing adviser. In discussions, staff reflected that providing enough privacy, while also being visible, approachable and accessible for drop ins was a delicate balance. The advisors are present each week and provide support for a range of issues including support with fuel costs and energy, and access to financial advice.

Stigma-free social environment through social connection

In the Edinburgh site, participants did not speak directly about the concept of stigma, but rather, they described the ways in which the relational approach taken by staff made them feel as though they mattered. As outlined in the methodology chapter of this report, the researchers did not ask directly about the experience of stigma on ethical grounds, as we considered that asking about stigma may cause a person to reflect and consider their identity in a negative way, thus creating research bias and the potential for distress. Instead, we asked about how people felt when accessing services, and asked participants to explore why they felt in particular ways. Those who took part in the interviews shared that the relational environment, the welcome, and the way they were treated by staff were fundamentally important to how they felt when accessing the service.

"They help with the food and other things and people chat to you and all the staff are really helpful. I am glad to come here. The people are so friendly and welcoming, and they are family."



"The most important thing is talking to people. And the people are lovely and this is the best foodbank in the area. The people that work here make it better. They give you enough stuff for what you need. The people are lovely, and they make feel welcome"

Most used the word 'helpful' to describe the staff and volunteers that they had met and almost all participants considered that this was highly important to them. For some, it was important the staff provided a play area and snacks for their children while they waited for their food package, as this communicated that their children's experience of coming there, and their experience of the service was important to them. Existing research by Yang et al. (2007)²⁷ notes that stigma can be considered to be a cultural phenomenon that changes between contexts and different social environments. The common factor in reducing stigma, according to their research, however, is to pay attention to what matters most to a person. For the participants who took part in our study, the welcome and supportive conversations with staff were considered to be of high importance. This appeared to offset the potential for stigma, which also helped to ease any initial embarrassment about needing food support. Some participants within this site shared the view that foodbanks should not need to exist at all, and noted that they had initially felt embarrassed when they received a foodbank referral. All participants who took part in the interviews expressed that they were glad that the foodbank existed though, and stated that after the first time of accessing it, they no longer felt embarrassed due to the friendly welcome given by staff.

The support provided by staff appeared to be initially an informal welcome, that could extend to further discussions, and referrals to formal support to address financial crisis, housing and other needs. Those who took part in the interviews described a range of circumstances that had led to them accessing the foodbank. Some were in financial crisis due to experiencing long-term illnesses that prevented access the job market. For some, the foodbank provided food, and an opportunity to speak to citizens advice bureau workers who could help them to work out where to obtain further support. Others were refugees without access to public funds or able to obtain paid work. Several participants expressed that they really valued not being judged.

²⁷ Yang L.H., Kleinman A., Link B.G., Phelan J.C., Lee S., and Good B., (2007) Culture and stigma: adding moral experience to stigma theory. *Social Science & Medicine*. Vol. 64, pp 1524–1535.



"The people are really good at what they do. I like when people come to talk to me and are friendly and they are really open. They don't look down on me."

Some expressed feeling more comfortable, and not judged because staff and volunteers at this Foodbank made an effort to engage with them, and to make sure that they supported them to access other services. Accessing financial advice as part of a cash-first approach is a key focus within Scotland, as part of an endeavour to increase financial resilience and lift people out of poverty²⁸. The provision of additional services at this Foodbank Plus was identified as being a key contextual factor related to the attainment of outcomes such as improved financial circumstances. As the quote below demonstrates, however, the provision of additional services also helped to reduce the likelihood of people experiencing stigma, as it communicated to people that staff and volunteers care about each person, and seek to do what they can to help.

"I've been to a different foodbank. The other service they were friendly, but they didn't help you with other things they didn't make an effort or engage with the people as much. Having the other things makes it much better because it makes you feel more comfortable."

For some, there was also the sense that staff and volunteers were going 'above and beyond' the call of duty to help, and this was also internalised as a caring, stigma-free approach. In some instances, this meant that staff and volunteers had spoken with people who did not have a referral, and helped them to get one, or in some cases, directed them to other services that could meet their needs.

"The staff and volunteers make such a difference. If it wasn't for the team here, I wouldn't be where I am now [...] They are trying to really helps us."

Some described the support they had received at the foodbank plus as 'amazing'; others described it as a 'Godsend'. Some noted that they had experienced improvements to their mental health as a result of no longer having to worry about where their next food was coming from.

²⁸ Scottish Government (2023) *Cash-First - towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland: plan*. Edinburgh: Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice. Available: [Cash-First - towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland: plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/resources/consultation-papers/cash-first-towards-ending-the-need-for-food-banks-in-scotland-plan/). Accessed 12th September 2023.



"Coming here is helping with my mental health and it helps me with my mental health. They never judge you and which is great. You don't need to worry as much about where the next food is coming in there."

For some, despite the importance of relationships the relative anonymity of the service was also attractive and the ability to speak with people who were not aware of all their life circumstances, and the challenges they were facing.

" It is helpful that I can go out of the house and my mental health is better because I can speak to people that don't know all my struggles."

Notably, what appeared to work well was being offered support without feeling that disclosing parts of themselves that they would rather not was what seemed to help people to feel comfortable in the setting. From the narratives of people who were accessing food at the foodbank, it appeared that staff were able to strike a positive balance between offering help and support, assessing needs, and linking people in with other services to help them to achieve social outcomes. A participant describes this below.

"Everything is getting more expensive and as an asylum seeker it is difficult. They have helped me so much. [Staff member name] has helped me with many things and they have been so supportive. He gave me the chance to live my life again."

Participants in the interviews in this site did not reflect directly on the topic of stigma, but rather, discussed the opposite – the sense of being welcomed by friendly staff that genuinely appeared to care about their wellbeing. It was the opposite of judgement that related most closely to the notion of stigma, and through their ability to connect, staff appeared to be offsetting any risk of stigma within the setting. We noted that whilst in some of the other deep dive sites there was a sense of collectivism and community within this Foodbank Plus site the relationships for were not necessarily to others who were in the same position, but rather, between staff/volunteers providing the service. This suggests that in these sites one of the most valuable aspects of the service provision, in terms of making a social impact, appeared to be staff member's ability to conduct dynamic, on-the-spot needs assessments while also respecting people's boundaries, and communicating non-judgement, and thereby non-stigma.



Cost of living crisis

Within the interviews, the researchers asked participants about the impact that the cost of living may be having upon their lives. Many expressed that the rising cost of food, as well as the rising costs of electricity and gas was leading to increasing levels of financial strain, as the participant below describes.

"The cost-of-living crisis have been a challenge. I lost my job and need to look after a family of three and having to pay for electricity and rent has been a challenge"

Others described situations where they were struggling to meet the dietary needs of their family members due to the impact of the cost-of-living crisis.

"The cost-of-living crisis has been difficult. I have three children and two children with dietary requirements that can be difficult to fulfil (allergies, ill-ness related). They might have choice here that is why I was referred to it."

For those who were struggling to meet dietary requirements the offer of choice at the foodbank was crucial.

Within the foodbank, people were not permitted to have more than 6 repeat referrals except in circumstances where the person or family had no access to public funds. Those in this situation mentioned that the cost-of-living crisis had exacerbated an already difficult situation. Several mentioned that the uncertainty about this was causing them to feel increasingly stressed but noted that they were grateful to this foodbank in particular because they would waive the cap on repeat use of the foodbank for people in this situation. An illustrative example related to this is provided below.

"The cost-of-living crisis has been difficult. I have been receiving food from foodbanks because I had applied too many times for foodbanks, I am unable to access some, and this foodbank has helped. I don't have access to public recourse. So, I don't know what I can do, if I cannot get food here again."



We noted that several participants had three or more children, a social group who are known to be vulnerable to experiencing some of the deepest layers of poverty in Scotland²⁹. Several participants expressed that they required access to the foodbank because they had long-term illnesses, and could not afford food, housing and fuel costs as a result of inflation.

"Cost of living crisis is not funny anymore we are really struggling. Everyone is struggling to afford thing. It is really difficult, and we need to choose about bath, food or electricity."

Others indicated that they were experiencing in-work poverty and unable to meet the rising costs of rent and mortgages, and so had to access the foodbank to ensure that they were able to pay housing costs.

The importance of choice

As highlighted above for those struggling to meet dietary/nutritional needs choice was a key element of the service. However, the importance of choice was found to relate to several other themes.

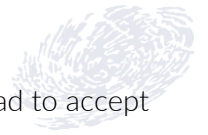
These were:

- Non-stigma/empowerment.
- Being a person, not a number.
- Feeling human and seen.

For some, being offered choice was experienced as feeling as though their preferences mattered to staff and volunteers. A few participants mentioned that being offered a cup of tea while waiting, and having someone come over to them to discuss their likes and dislikes before preparing the food package for them made them feel human and seen. Some noted that they had initially felt apprehensive and embarrassed about going to the foodbank, but the way that their choices and preferences were handled helped them to shed this feeling.

Some participants expressed that because they didn't have appliances such as refrigerators, or cookers, they were limited in what food they could use. For these participants, having a choice and being able to express what they could and couldn't make use of was described as being very important. Those who described having dietary requirements all reflected that they were able to meet these requirements, and all felt that they still had a good choice. Some participants, however,

²⁹ Scottish Government (2023) *Tackling child poverty families overview*. Edinburgh: Tackling Child Poverty and Social Justice Directorate.



felt that they were sometimes not able to have quite enough choice, and sometimes had to accept food that they did not like. Others liked that they sometimes were able to get a treat, such as a pudding.

What was most important to the person?

This subsection presents findings related to the elements of the service, or of the food that were most valued by those receiving it. We note that almost all participants who took part in the interviews at this site stated that the most important thing to them was having access to food that they otherwise may not have been able to access.

"The food is the most important. Just the food."

Most were experiencing extreme poverty, and without the foodbank, were worried about where their next meal would come from. Despite this, many followed immediately by saying that the staff and volunteers were very good, and that the support they were providing to them was the next most important thing.

"The most important thing is accessing food. The staff and volunteers are good."

Despite access to food being imperative, the relationships with staff were held to be important by those we spoke to. It became clear that people were communicating gratitude. This also reflects that most people who took part in the interviews found it difficult to identify what was most important to them when it came to accessing food from the service. The quotes below indicate the many benefits that people derived from accessing the service.

"They have food here and the people are really nice. They help with the food and other things and people chat to you and all the staff are really helpful. I am glad to come here. The people are so friendly and welcoming and they are family. The food has been really good the quality is good. I get a choice on what I want. It is good. It is really helpful. They are able to help with dietary requirements".

"They have the paper shopping list. It is an easy process. I am able to get what I want here. In other foodbanks I don't get that. The other foodbanks have nothing comparable and it is much less engaging. Good experience here. More people come here. It is open until 1 pm and people come later on. They look after us in many ways. They have other support with other things. Such about housing. One person will be that they will help and she will get furniture and white goods online for



me. So I am waiting. They have a support worker here and they are going to nominate someone to help me with this. The people are really helpful”.

As highlighted above for those struggling to meet dietary/nutritional needs choice was also key element of the service. However the importance of choice was found to relate to several other themes. These were:

- Non-stigma/empowerment.
- Being a person, not a number.
- Feeling human and seen.

For some, being offered choice was experienced as feeling as though their preferences mattered to staff and volunteers. A few participants mentioned that being offered a cup of tea while waiting, and having someone come over to them to discuss their likes and dislikes before preparing the food package for them made them feel human and seen. Some noted that they had initially felt apprehensive and embarrassed about going to the foodbank, but the way that their choices and preferences were handled helped them to shed this feeling.

Outcomes being achieved

The data presented in this section suggests that those accessing site 1 were experiencing improved access to food (TOC outcome 1). Many indicated that without this food, they were unsure where their next meal would be coming from. The evidence related to the impact that the food was having on people’s finances (TOC outcome 2) was less clear, primarily because many of the people we spoke with reported that they had no, or very limited income. For those with no income, the food was described as being a lifeline, rather than a way to save money that could be directed elsewhere. Some people accessing this site had no income, and no access to public funds and without the food provided, some would have had to go without food.

There was limited evidence that the food provided at this site led to people experiencing new foods (TOC outcome 3), although choice was seen as crucial for those struggling to meet their nutritional needs. Whilst the food itself was of primary importance, it did not appear to be something that participants wanted to discuss in detail. The evidence in relation to outcome 3 in this site should be considered inconclusive, and something that could be further investigated in future evaluations.



The insights provided by those accessing food at this site suggests that many people were partially achieving outcome 4, which is about connecting with others and feeling part of the community. Most described the value of connecting with staff, but the observational and interview data suggests that the interactions tended to be on a one-to-one basis. There was less evidence that people were connecting with others who were accessing the service. The exception to this, however, may be significant, as one participant shared that they had started to attend the church that hosts the foodbank, and this person appeared to have found both belonging and community. The evaluation focused upon examining the social impact of food and the outcomes that were observable from the qualitative data sources. It is possible that for the cohort of people accessing the Foodbank, the social outcomes may have been broader. For example, it is possible that those who engaged in the formal supports such as with the Citizens Advice worker, and/or the Housing Officer may have achieved social outcomes such as improved financial circumstances, improved access to welfare and improvements to housing stability. This cannot be conclusively known due to the qualitative focus of the evaluation methodology. A future examination of monitoring data to trace the longer-term outcomes achieved by those referred to other services via the Foodbank may enable these more formal outcomes to be assessed.

The evaluation findings suggest that many participants were achieving TOC outcome 6, improved health and wellbeing. Many reported improvements to mental health due to worrying less about where their next meal would be coming from. Many also considered that their relationships with staff had led to improved health and wellbeing, as they felt more confident and cared about than they had prior to accessing the service.

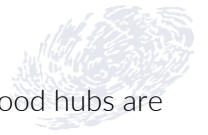
Site 2: Midlands

Context, background and observations

Rhubarb Farm is located on the Derbyshire-Nottinghamshire border and is made up of three food hubs from which food is distributed and sent to hubs as part of a social supermarket model. The site works across the border in both Mansfield and Bolsover, but their active work with food hubs is predominantly within Bolsover. Bolsover has a population of 80,500³⁰, and it is the most deprived district in Derbyshire and the 79th most income deprived area in England³¹.

³⁰ ONS Population estimates - local authority based by five year age band, 2021 data. [Link](#).


³¹ ONS, 2019. Exploring local income deprivation. [Link](#).



Rhubarb Farm also grow their own produce, which is also supplied to food hubs. The food hubs are equipped with a commercial fridge and freezer and food is received from FareShare, and sometimes also from other grants and directly from supermarkets. Hubs operate as social supermarkets, where people pay a low fixed price for a particular quantity of food. Each social supermarket sets its own limits on specific types of products or overall number of bags that customers can buy in order to manage the supply for the number of people coming. There is no requirement for a referral or evidence of need to access food through the social supermarket, and people are invited to choose their items in the order in which they arrive at the hub. Once everyone has had the opportunity to buy their items, if there is still stock remaining, customers are invited to go for a second bag if they wish. (Again, with priority given to those who arrived first).

The research team visited all three food hub sites and noted that there was a general sense of pride, where many participants reflected the value of being able to extend their household budget in this way. Most people who were accessing the service who took part in the interviews gave the impression that without the food hub, they would still be able to afford food, but it would mean having very little money left to spend on other essentials, like heating, electricity and other household bills. It appeared that for these participants, it would be the cumulative impact of higher spending overall that would create financial issues, rather than a one-off more expensive food bill. Many participants in the three sites discussed the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and noted that inflation was causing financial strain. Researchers noted, however, that there was a lot of similar phrasing around this issue, which may suggest that this is a common conversation for those who frequent the hubs, reflecting the rise in financial pressures generally, and highlighting this as one of the main issues that people were experiencing more widely at this time. This appeared to relate to a sense of solidarity, and all being in the same position. This reflects the informality of the setting and denotes a relaxed and friendly atmosphere where people felt willing, and able to discuss their situations freely.

In all three food hub sites, people described struggling with finances, mental health and/or physical health. It was evident that staff and volunteers spend time developing relationships and getting to know people who appear to be struggling more. All three sites also linked to foodbanks, where staff could refer those who appeared to be financially struggling to meet the cost of the food supplied at the hubs. The food hubs do not require referrals and do not have specific eligibility criteria, which may account for the characteristics and nature of the people who access and use them. In general, these appeared to be people who would not qualify for free food from foodbanks, due to not facing extreme enough financial hardship. We noted, however, that many were close to that line, and without access to low-cost food, they could easily go over it, and require crisis support. There was a



general sense that people who were accessing the food hub were not struggling for basic survival, but nor were they in a financial position to be described as thriving.

We noted that most of the people who were willing to be interviewed in the food hubs were invested in the social aspects of the hub. We observed, however, that there were also people who arrived, got their food, and left quickly without speaking to anyone. The experience of the other group, those who did not engage, and who moved through the space quickly and quietly, remains unknown. In the sub-sections that follow, we provide insight into the aspects of the food provision that appeared as most important to those accessing it.

Stigma-free social environment

Most people who took part in the interviews expressed the view that staff at the hubs were always friendly and approachable. Some felt that the food being low cost, rather than free meant that they had experienced less stigma when compared to accessing food via a food bank. Others did not make this distinction but reflected nonetheless that the experience was positive, and free from stigma. Most felt that everyone who accessed the hubs were in the same, or similar positions, and they were using the hub to make the family budget go as far as possible. Many people valued the friendly atmosphere and mentioned that they often felt inspired to try new recipes that they had heard about while visiting the hub.

Individuals connect with others and feel part of their community

Observation data indicates that there were a mix of age groups and genders attending the hubs, including parents with young children, people who were there individually, as part of a couple, or with a friend. It appeared that many people attending the hub knew each other, and some came along to the hub with others. It appeared that the environment was very social, and there were conversations occurring between many people and groups, who were all observed to be sharing ideas about foods, and recipes to try to use the available ingredients. Some of the older people who were attending the hub reflected with humour that some of the younger people didn't know how to use ingredients and stated that they were enjoying sharing cooking wisdom with them while there. One participant describes the environment below.

"It's an important social hub. It's good to chat to people and get out. Seeing people while they're queuing for the food hub is an important aspect for these three women."



In one of the hub sites, a staff member described the hub as a useful community and social service as well as it being a place where people could buy low-cost food. This staff member noted that the hub also provided an opportunity for them to get to know families and took opportunities to signpost people to relevant other services where possible.

In another of the hub locations, a staff member mentioned that people were tending to arrive one hour before the hub opened, to start to queue. The researcher also attended to observe the queue and reflected that there was a social atmosphere and often hub users would offer to help staff to set up. A hub user describes the social aspect of the environment below.

"What is most valuable aspect of the experiences that you've had here? Why?"

It's a community space, you see the same people and talk to people and that's good."

The narratives given by participants suggests that for some, the hubs were playing an important role in reducing social isolation and contributing to community wellbeing. Over the summer, one hub had begun to offer £1 lunches that were prepared by the hub staff. A staff member reflected that this had helped people to connect, and that this increased the social aspect of what they described as being a community resource during which people could eat together. Staff members reflected that although there are people who only come in occasionally, there are a lot of people who come in on a regular basis and who build up relationships with each other and with staff. In hubs where there were no communal eating opportunities, however, we noted that there was still a coming together of people, who appeared to strike up conversations with each other about the food that was available, and recipes to use with the food. We noted that there did not appear to be a difference between the social impact and the sense of connectedness and community at locations that prepared meals for communal eating, and those that did not.

Cost of living crisis

We noted that those who were accessing the food hubs appeared to be facing less acute food shortages and poverty than those in site 1, the Foodbank Plus as many were on low, or fixed incomes, rather than having no access to public funds and no income from employment. However, those attending the hubs described not being far away from financial crisis. The food provided at low cost appeared to be helping money to stretch further and it was leaving more money to meet the costs of other essentials.



“The cost of food, with rising prices, and multiple children/grandchildren is a big impact. With other costs going up too, being able to access low-cost food helps because food is a lot of the household budget”.

For some, the school summer holidays had made stretching finances to cover the cost of food more difficult. This had led to some people who wouldn't usually use the food hub to go there to access food. Several participants described having heard about the food hub from friends when they had mentioned the added strain caused by the school holidays.

People appeared to be accessing the food hub for a range of reasons, but all felt that the food hub was helping them to meet rising costs, and still have access to good quality food. Many participants we spoke to mentioned that they were retired people, and thereby on a fixed income. They noted that although inflation had gone up, their pensions had not gone up at the same rate, and so without low-cost food, meeting the cost of essentials was difficult. Others were of working age and described also struggling to pay for essentials due to being in low paid roles. Being able to save on food costs had helped these participants to make their money go further.

Choice

Most people expressed the view that there was some choice but noted that meat was usually available in limited quantities, which meant having to share out small quantities across a large range of types of meat.

“There's usually lots of choice and a good range. Meat is often lacking, or in limited quantities which means having to share out small quantities across a big range. Its good having a mix of store cupboard and fresh food, but sometimes there's lots of useless things like meat substitutes which are not relevant to me”.

Most felt that having choice was relatively important but reflected that so far, they had been able to have enough choice to allow them to make meals that were suitable for them and their families, as the quote below illustrates.

“It's very good to have the choice, although the food available can be variable. There is always a sensible range of things so you can get something to make a meal”.



Most also mentioned, however that having a limited range of choice could also have some benefits because it got people talking, sharing creative inspiration about how to use the ingredients and what to cook.

“Knowing it is part of recycling is definitely a good part of it. I enjoy that because it means you get different things every time, which gives you inspiration and makes things more enjoyable”

They noted that this meant that people were experiencing a bigger range of foods, rather than getting the same things each time as they might have done when using supermarkets.

“You get some creative inspiration about what to cook and eat because it is based on what food you can get, rather than going round the supermarket and getting the same things each time”

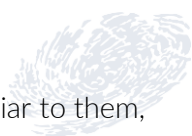
As the quotes above show, many participants used derivatives of the word ‘inspiration’ to describe this experience, and we observed that it also gave people a topic to connect over and to discuss. Most noted that the availability and choice of food at the hub was variable, but choice seemed to be less of an issue for this group, who appeared to be keen to make the most of what was there each week.

Surplus food

Most participants expressed that they had not paid much attention to where the food was coming from. For some however reducing food waste was very important to them. A few felt that on reflection, it was a bonus that the food would otherwise have gone to waste but noted that it was something that they had not really considered before. A few were concerned that if surplus food was being used in this way, there might be less discounted foods available in supermarkets, but again noted that they had not considered this before.

What was most important to the person

The food hubs featured a lot of informal socialisation and discussion and appeared to be contributing to the development of a community of belonging. However, when asked what was most important to them, most people said that the most important thing was **being able to get the food at low cost**. Several mentioned that the most important thing for them was to be able to get meat because this was, to them, a good base for a meal, and also very expensive when purchased in supermarkets.



Many reflected that it was also important to them to be able to get food that was familiar to them, and easy to cook. Those catering for their grandchildren regularly said that it was very important that they were able to access food that appeals to the children in their families. Some felt that because it was low cost, it felt less risky to try new things that family members may not like, and so they felt more able to try new things.

For a few participants, the most important thing was to be able to have a cup of tea together, sit down, socialise, meet people and chat to friends while also getting food for the week.

Outcomes being achieved

The insights provided by people accessing food at site 2 provides evidence that those accessing the service were experiencing improved access to food (TOC outcome 1). There was also evidence that people were experiencing financial savings, and that the access to low-cost food had enabled them to stretch their household budgets further to pay for other essentials (TOC outcome 2). We noted that in this site, there was strong evidence against TOC outcome 3, as one of the key features of this site was that the conversations between those accessing it had led to many feeling willing and able to try new foods. This also related to TOC outcome 4 (connecting with others and feeling part of their community), and how to cook with the available ingredients appeared to be a common discussion among people accessing the service. Conversations at times when there was low or limited choice in the foods available tended to focus on the sharing of ideas, tips and recipes. This contributed to a sense of solidarity, and the development of a solidaristic and emerging community, built around the theme of 'we are all in this together'. This also related to the attainment of outcome 5, reduced social isolation. Many within this site described accessing the site as a social event and reported reduced social isolation as a result. A combination of the food, and the community interaction were implicated in the attainment of outcome 6, which relates to improved health and wellbeing. Many reported trying new, healthy options and feeling more confident to do so thanks to the advice given by others who were using the service, including older people who reported sharing wisdom with younger people related to how to cook and how to use the ingredients on offer. The improved health and wellbeing outcomes being achieved in this site appeared to relate to physical health, mental health and social wellbeing.

Site 3: Littlehampton Community Fridge (Sussex)

Context, background and observations



Littlehampton Community Fridge is a community fridge and freezer site, operating out of a Methodist church. It is based in a small coastal town in Sussex with a population of 28,000 people. It is based in a mixed area with some wealth yet some high levels of deprivation. The site itself is in one of the 10% most deprived areas in England³².

The fridge/freezer food support offer is slim: For example, it offers 5 items per person only from the fridges and freezer over a short opening time (1.5 hours or until the food runs out), 5 days a week. The person can choose which 5 items they wish. However, there are also many ambient items for example, vegetables, fruits, pastries, tins, cakes etc. These items tend to be unlimited.

There was no regular additional support although the fridge arranges occasional visits from support services such as Early Help³³, and both volunteers and other users actively support one another in different ways outside the opening hours. There are several volunteers on hand, some of whom are in receipt of food support themselves. It is run entirely by volunteers. The service occasionally closes due to food shortages or delays in deliveries.

There are no eligibility criteria to access the food support. This results in a diverse range of people accessing the service that spans different ethnicities, ages, genders and family structures. People in employment access food support at this site, as well as those unemployed, retired, full-time carers etc. There are those in-work grateful for a little extra support, people struggling and those in very challenging situations, including homeless people.

The Littlehampton Community Fridge varies when it opens (morning and afternoon) but tends to open for 1.5 hours only, for example 11.00-12.30, yet some people join the queue as early as 8am for this opening. The queue grows very long, and it is reported that it can reach approximately 120 people at its peak.

The site has a basic single-page website. Alongside this, they have a very active Facebook page. This is used to inform people of their opening hours, of local events of interest, of the day's food offer and in case they do not have food to distribute. Fridge users also contribute advice, tips and appreciation.

Emphasising food waste, the site positions itself as more of an environmental charity, rather than more food bank-style service. The text on their webpage reads:

³² Ministries of Housing, Community and local Government (2019) *English Indices of Deprivation*, Available online: <https://imd-by-postcode.opendatacommunities.org/imd/2019> [Accessed November 2023]

³³ [Arun East Family Hub \(Littlehampton\) - West Sussex County Council](#)



“Anyone can come and take 5 items per adult per day (plus bread). It costs nothing, as all the food is rescued and needs a home to stop it being wasted!”

Financial donations are accepted from individuals able to contribute, and volunteers also distribute food to more rural communities or individuals who are not able to access the site.

The researcher observed that there were benches for people to sit or rest but no formal social spaces.

There was a positive atmosphere within the queue and a calm, orderly site with efficient food distribution, clear instructions, and well-labelled food items. Volunteers played a pivotal role in creating the convivial environment, chatting with people, asking how they are doing, and giving special attention to children.

The volunteers actively managed the food distribution, ensuring that rare or high-value items did not run out too quickly, reserving specific items for individuals with dietary requirements, such as vegan, vegetarian, or gluten-free preferences. Some food was set aside for the homeless people who rely on the site.

Attendance frequency varied, with some attending nearly every day, others on a weekly basis, and some sporadically or monthly. Among those we spoke to, most found out about the site through word of mouth. They reported that they came for the food, although some came originally as donors/potential volunteers. Almost all reported that they really appreciated the site having no eligibility criteria, with one person feeling it should be means tested.

Cost-of-living crisis

The cost-of-living crisis has significantly affected all those we spoke to. As a result, many, including those in work, struggled to pay both household and shopping bills. Those receiving pensions or with two or more children reported to find balancing their budget particularly challenging. The financial insecurity meant that people were limited in what they could do.

“It has helped a hell of a lot. I was in a lot of money trouble, and I could see the difference of me getting out but a hell of a lot of money. I ...see the difference of it helping me out with money as well.

And then gas and electric where that's all going up and then you put the pennies in the pot down there and the girls are good and they say how many items it is and if you are in trouble yourself, talk to us at the end we'll sort you out. Which they do. They have been really, really friendly”.



“It's changed your life in general, what you can do and what you can't do. Food obviously comes, takes priority. We need food, don't we?”

As such the financial savings people made were very important to them. People gave many examples of how accessing the food had led to relief and having extra budget to cover other essentials (and significantly reduced stress and anxiety, explored below under mental health). We explored how much people saved and estimates varied from £5 per week to £500 per month. Almost everyone we spoke to reported shopping differently, for example going to food shops less, buying less, and not buying their usual food as a result of inflation.

“I'm on my own with my daughter and my rent is very high. It helps a lot, especially on maternity pay at the moment to see that gets limited again... I made a whole meal from the bits I got from here the other day, and it lasted me for two dinners and that was for both of us. And I've still got spares left over”.

“It makes a very (big) difference because ... we just joined here; we are from (abroad), so we just came here with families. So, we are getting less salaries, not that much. So, we can save money for our children also”.

Choice

Individuals reported access to a greater variety of food and to high quality and good brands, which they appreciated. For example, interviewees listed: different types of bread, cream, vegan meats, caviar, flowers and treats. There were regular gluts, for examples boxes of tomatoes that the volunteers had to encourage people to take more of. This encouraged individuals to experiment with new foods and recipes, enhancing their dietary habits.

This food offer also changed daily as the site receives new food every day from different sources. The interviewees appreciated the choice of food on offer and some reported feeling excited to see what new food would be on offer at their next visit. The following quotes also highlight the positive impact of accessing good quality food for child development.

“Obviously, I'm not spending as much in the shops on things that I would normally buy anyway and it's allowing me to obviously expose my daughter to those different flavours and textures, but I



wouldn't necessarily get from the shop because I wouldn't be able to afford it or what I would want to get. I wouldn't be able to get as much volume wise.”

“... it helps me open up a range of foods. Variety for my daughter because budgeting for a meal shop and things and the prices going up and obviously baby milk is really high in price, not by choice. I had to get baby milk. So, it's really beneficial for her more so than me. It allows me to give her spinach and cabbage and carrots and bananas and apples and oranges ... “

Stigma-free environment

Despite initial apprehension for some, the absence of stigma was a key theme, with the individuals finding the environment, volunteers and other people accessing food to be welcoming and inclusive, and therefore they felt welcome.

Another main driver of this is likely related to the fridge's mission to prevent food waste as this was mentioned in the interviews and group conversations a number of times:

“I say it's saving the waste as well, which makes me feel better about it. I don't feel that I'm sort of scrounging so much.”

The lack of eligibility criteria was also important for some with one interviewee who had previously accessed a food bank finding the experience to be challenging. By contrast, with the fridge, people felt their dignity was still intact. They had a strong sense of helping out by taking the food and felt solidarity with the other people present. For some the link with reduced food waste, and being able to make donations to the fridge, accorded with their own values around this, reduced the stigma of what might otherwise be considered to be charitable giving.

“Over the years, people were quite scared or looked down upon themselves. They were coming here and it's like, no, no, you are doing us a favour. And that really changes everybody's attitude then because they put it back on them. You're doing me a favour. I don't have to put it in the bin now. Thanks.”

“And I think that's the whole point of the Littlehampton community fridge. Whilst it does help those who are maybe struggling a little bit or just can't get any food in that week or whatever, it also means that that food isn't just going to be thrown away and then wasted and contribute to landfill ...”



Motivated by reducing food waste

Beyond the relationship between stigma and food waste, many of the people we spoke to were motivated to reduce food waste. For many, accessing food support at this site has led to a growing awareness of the issues of food waste in the UK. The interviewees had strong opinions, including anger, about the flaws in the UK food system and the levels of waste caused by the food producers and supermarkets. This made many of them angry. For others, this was their primary motivation for accessing the site. This was particularly pronounced for those who were in better financial situations.

“So, we sort of had in mind as a family, we try and be a bit conscious of environment, so we felt like it was a good thing to do. And also, it saves us a lot of money, so it's working for that reason too. But originally it was the eco reasons. Initially we thought this was a good cause. We just used to go and get bread because they always had hundreds and hundreds of breads. “

“It makes me angry even thinking about it. It's criminal. And that food waste, actually, I was born during the war and the rationing. So, I see food waste and neglected waste, which I think landfill is neglected. Waste. I really get annoyed about it “

Individuals connect with others and feel part of their community

The queue outside the fridge served as a social hub. Nearly everyone reported how much they enjoyed the friendships and camaraderie of the queue. Volunteers played a crucial role in creating a warm and welcoming atmosphere, for instance going out to chat with people, bringing special treats for children and even cakes on people's birthdays (particularly children). The social connections formed created a sense of being supported and people reported reduced isolation as a result.

The queue also facilitated social interactions beyond the queue and some people, used it as a way to spend some time with others during the day. There was a strong sense of emotional support for each other and 'looking out for each other'. A further strong area to emerge was sharing advice and informally supporting one another. People shared recipes, tips, information, ideas and found this very helpful.

“I used to come here first only about 15 minutes before they opened but because it was a long sort of queue and that was it. You didn't get a lot of time to chat to people you see because you're virtually in. But now as I say, we get here a bit earlier, have a little chin wag with people, people talk about different things, like through their lives and we do well, people get to know your name and it's quite pleasant”.



“When we're in the queue, we often say things that are money saving tips, how to be greener, how to do things. So, in a way it's educational as well. Never too old to learn.”

Interestingly, one person compared their experience of Littlehampton Community Fridge to accessing another food distribution site where the queue is less of a feature and noted that the conviviality was not the same.

“It's quite a social thing. Everyone gathers and talks, and I've met people who've offered recipe ideas and swap puzzles, things like that. It's a bit of a community thing that's really sweet. So, it's nice. And I think occasionally we still do go to the drop-in one at [another food site] and it doesn't feel quite the same because everyone doesn't hang around for quite as long. It's just a grab-and-go sort of thing.”

People also looked out for each other and if they didn't see them in the queue as usual, contacted them to check they were.

“And also, if somebody doesn't come, if you haven't seen them in a little while. So, you phone them up and say, do you want me to get you anything or are you alright? So, it's a welfare thing as well.”


There were many benefits to be had from the queue but there were also some frustrations from having to wait so long. Further, some people with anxiety flagged up they found it was a struggle. People also noted that there were some very hot days and very wet days where queuing is problematic. It should be noted that people did still come queue even in bad weather. One person noted that they might not come out in the winter or speak to anyone else were it not for the site:

“You probably wouldn't speak to anyone. You wouldn't come out, especially in the winter since you come out here even when it's raining.”

Additional benefits

Increased food knowledge

Accessing the fridge led to increased awareness of food practices, reduced food waste, and greater confidence in handling food. People shared knowledge with each other and the volunteers about ways to reduce their own food waste, rely less on printed dates, be more conscious of not wasting food, etc. They also reported being exposed to new food, learning more about cooking with new items, trying new recipes and so forth.



“... I think it's probably led me to be more conscientious of how much food I'm using and my food wastage. I've sort of realised things will actually last a lot longer than is necessarily labelled or how it looks, etcetera.”

“...It's very nice to have some top-quality stuff which you haven't had to pay for. And the variety means (there is a) huge variety of stuff we've never come across before ...And you think, my goodness didn't know that's even existed.”

Some of the people we spoke to reported that they had become volunteers at the site. Conversations between those accessing the site led to knowledge-sharing on a wide range of topics including eligibility for free childcare, clothing exchanges, career advice, and support during times of illness, death or grief. The community fostered connections across income and class boundaries.

Improved health & wellbeing

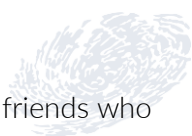
Access to a diverse range of food item, particularly the wide variety of fruit and veg, resulted in healthier eating habits and improved overall well-being. Almost everyone reported eating more healthily, even if they were healthy before. Additionally, the physical activity associated with walking to the fridge and dealing with collected food had positive health implications. Furthermore, the community provided emotional support and assistance in overcoming various challenges.

“Yes. I think probably a bit of both physically and mentally. So physically, obviously I'm getting out of the house, I'm walking a little bit, it's not far distance from my house, but I'm walking a little bit to obviously get there. It gets my daughter out the house when we're not doing other activities because obviously where we've had some holiday days or her normal extracurricular activities that I go out and do with her been stopped.”

“I suffer with mental health problems myself. I have severe depression, anxiety and emotionally unstable personality disorder. And this place keeps me alive. Literally. My dad died two months ago and if I didn't have this place and these guys, I dunno if I'd be here. Yeah, that's what I get from the project - all their support from the volunteers and the customers, they become like family.”

Reciprocity

Many of the people we spoke to shared onwards either directly for example taking boxes to their church/ items for neighbours and family members or through cooking e.g., taking surplus items and



making food to then share with others (jam, cakes, casseroles), including neighbours or friends who are themselves more vulnerable.

“Quite a few people today have taken food to put outside their own houses.”

Further, people also bring things in (clothes, food) to share with one another/ the Fridge. It was a highly reciprocal supportive community.

Most important

We explored the most important aspect of support for interviewees. The most frequent responses were:

- Being able to access free or low-cost food and the financial savings and reduced levels of worry that are closely related
- The variety of food on offer
- Preventing food from going to waste
- Connecting with others in the community and the volunteers.

Outcomes being achieved

The qualitative findings gathered in this site indicate that those accessing food here were experiencing improved access to food (TOC outcome 1). There was also evidence that people were making financial savings (TOC outcome 2). Many reported that they were saving between £5 per week and £500 per month, depending on how often they were accessing the community fridge. Interviewees reported using supermarkets differently (going less frequently, buying less and not buying preferred foods if they were more expensive than other choices) as a result of the food being provided, and commented on the significance of being able to save money in this way. There was also evidence that people were able to experience new foods (TOC outcome 3). Many mentioned that they were able to experiment with different types of vegetables to find ones that their children would enjoy. Several felt that this was having a positive impact on their children’s health and wellbeing as well as their own (TOC outcome 6). Some of the strongest outcomes described at this site relate to connecting with others and feeling part of a community (TOC outcome 4). As with the previous site (site 2), the queue outside the community fridge appeared to be functioning as a self-evolving, informal, yet important social hub. Many reported that the friendships and camaraderie experienced in the queue had led to them experiencing less social isolation (TOC outcome 5). Many described improved physical health as a result of increased access to healthy food and improved



mental health and wellbeing as a result of being able to connect with people while attending the site (TOC outcome 6).

Chapter five: discussion

In this chapter, we respond to the evaluation questions with reference to the evaluation findings. The chapter is structured around the questions outlined below.

1. What is the impact of FareShare's work on individuals who access food services?
 - a. Does this align with the outcomes identified in FareShare's existing theory of change?
 - b. Are some outcomes more meaningful to people accessing food than others?
 - c. Are there additional outcomes that FareShare is not currently accounting for?
2. What is FareShare's contribution towards achieving outcomes for individuals? In future, how can FareShare measure and report on impact on individuals?
3. Which types of organisations and food provisions are better at achieving social outcomes for individuals? What can FareShare learn from these findings as to the types of organisations that may be better at maximising the social value of surplus food?

One of the key aims of the evaluation was to consider whether the intended outcomes for beneficiaries, based on those outlined in FareShare's theory of change, are being achieved; whether any of those outcomes are more meaningful to people accessing food than others; and whether there are additional outcomes being experienced by beneficiaries which FareShare is not currently accounting for in its theory of change. A copy of the theory of change is provided in [Appendix four](#).

The evaluation examined the extent to which the outcomes below were being achieved.

- Improved access to food (outcome 1).
- Financial savings (outcome 2).
- Experiencing new foods (outcome 3).
- Individuals connect with others and feel part of their community (outcome 4).
- Reduced social isolation (outcome 5).
- Improved health and wellbeing (outcome 6).

This chapter is divided into subsections, which each relate to the outcomes outlined above.

Outcome 1: Improved access to food



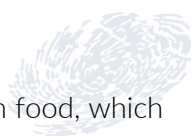
Both the survey findings, and the qualitative data gathered within the deep dive sites suggest that in all settings, those accessing FareShare food report that they have **improved access to food**. As such, we conclude that FareShare is having a positive impact on people being able to access food. Indeed, respondents who took part in the survey conducted for this evaluation indicated that this was the most significant and most helpful aspect of the support that they had received via the charities. This is an important finding when considered within the framework of contribution analysis because although formal and informal support provided within the charities was important to the attainment of other social outcomes, the food provided by FareShare appeared to be both the initial draw, and the reason why people continued to engage with the charity.

Poor diets and skipping meals are considered to be a major issue facing people who live in low-income households in the UK, and the situation is worsening due to the rising costs of food, and other household essentials³⁴. The findings of the current evaluation indicate that FareShare is also having a positive impact on people's diet, and we note that within the survey, over 76% of respondents have indicated that thanks to being able to access FareShare food, they are now able to eat more fruit and vegetables. A further 57% noted that because they had been able to access FareShare food, they were now skipping less meals.

Outcome 2: Financial savings

From the evidence we would also conclude that the food provided by FareShare was enabling people to make financial savings. The evaluation examined whether the self-reports from people with lived experience of accessing FareShare food aligned with the outcomes already identified within FareShare's existing theory of change. The findings of the current evaluation confirm that direct beneficiaries (people receiving food) are of the view that accessing the food enables them to make financial savings. To add further context to this finding, we noted that within the qualitative responses within the survey, and in the accounts from direct beneficiaries within the deep dive sites, many people shared that the cost-of-living crisis, and inflation had increased people's financial struggles. Many noted that they were struggling to pay for essentials such as household bills and food. The qualitative data suggested that many people currently accessing FareShare food had been experiencing financial strain before the cost-of-living crisis, but for most, the situation had worsened. The increase financial strain also negatively impacts on many people's mental health and their sense of wellbeing. Many reported that they were now experiencing escalating levels of debt. FareShare

³⁴ Earwaker, R., & Johnson-Hunter, M. (2023). Unable to escape persistent hardship: JRF's Cost of Living Tracker, summer 2023. York: Joseph Rowntree Foundation.



food appeared to be reducing some of this strain, by enabling people to save money on food, which could be diverted into paying for other household essentials. Furthermore, +57% of respondents reported that they skip fewer or no meals as a result of the financial savings that they are making by accessing the food support. Although seemingly low compared to the strength of other responses, this is still a striking figure suggesting high rates of people facing hunger prior to accessing food support and the high rates who still cannot afford enough food to eat.

Research question 1b asks, *are some outcomes more meaningful to people accessing food than others?* The evaluation findings suggest that some outcomes are indeed more meaningful to people than others. Access to food, and access to higher quality food was the most important outcome from the perspectives of those we heard from through both the interviews and the survey. The survey findings, however, suggest that the ability to make financial savings by accessing food support is of high importance. In the survey, 73% of respondents attested to experiencing reduced financial pressure as a result of accessing FareShare food. When asked about the most helpful aspects of the support and most meaningful outcomes, the second most frequently cited response was reduction of financial pressure. When questioned about the potential consequences of not accessing food support, the most common response was a worsening financial situation, often intertwined with increased food insecurity. Many noted that being able to make financial savings had led to reduced debt, and an increased ability to pay for other household bills, and purchase essentials such as school uniforms. For many, achieving the outcome of making financial savings was closely linked to improved wellbeing.

The evaluation also found examples that illustrate the scale of financial savings which people were achieving. In the Littlehampton site, interviewees estimated financial savings of between a few pounds and £500 per month because of accessing redistributed food. Across the other sites, people gave many examples of how the savings had allowed them to stretch their budgets further. Adding a financial estimation to savings made may be an interesting add-on for future FareShare evaluations involving individuals.

Outcome 3: experiencing new foods

The survey findings indicate that people were able to experience a variety and diversity of food as a result of the food support they received. In total, +81% of survey respondents had tried new foods as a result of accessing food support.



The benefits are not limited to increased variety but also increased access to healthy food. The survey results found a high net score of +76% when respondents were asked if they now consumed more fruit and vegetables. For many, accessing redistributed food led to improved diets, as some reported having had to go without fruit and vegetables. Within the survey, more than 66% of respondents felt they were eating more healthily, thereby demonstrating FareShare's impact in relation to improved health and nutrition. Parents and caregivers, in particular, noted that being able to access free or low-cost fruit and vegetables was helpful, because it allowed them to introduce new things to their children's diets without knowing in advance whether they would like these. Some felt that this was having a positive impact on their children's health, wellbeing (outcome 6) and overall development.

The findings indicate that outcome 3, the ability to experience new foods may be less meaningful than some of the other outcomes, from the perspectives of those accessing food. We noted that while the majority of respondents shared positive experiences, a small number of survey respondents expressed concerns about the quality and suitability of the food at their respective sites. Being able to experience improved access to food more generally (outcome 1) was consistently viewed as one of the most meaningful outcomes, but there was less emphasis on the ability to try new foods (outcome 3). Despite this we note that within the deep dive site interviews, and in the survey data, there were many examples of people **trying new foods, new brands, experimenting with different fruits and vegetables, and accessing previously unaffordable staples.**

Beyond dietary changes, individuals also reported **increased food knowledge and cooking confidence.** This positive change was often the result of guidance provided by the sites' staff, volunteers, and fellow service users.

- Within the survey and the deep dive site interviews, many respondents mentioned gaining confidence and enjoyment in the kitchen through exposure to new foods and recipes. This also emerged strongly among the parent/carer respondents within the survey data.
- Some respondents highlighted their ability to extend meals using ingredients like pulses, demonstrating practical skills acquired through their engagement with food support services.
- The new/renewed confidence led to a greater enthusiasm for cooking and meal preparation.

Increased knowledge and skills in relation to cooking are associated with increased fruit and vegetable consumption. Studies in the UK and Ireland have shown an association between occupation or socioeconomic status and skills or confidence to cook and suggested that the lack of



confidence and poor cooking skills contributes towards the lower fruit and vegetable intake of low socioeconomic groups³⁵.

While participants did not share views on how these new experiences may have contributed to health and nutrition, these healthier choices are likely to have had a positive impact on both physical and mental health. Thus, we found evidence of the strong relationship between outcomes, where financial savings had led to increased opportunities to experience new foods, which in turn, appeared to be leading to improved health and wellbeing. Some survey respondents reported that regular access to **better food**, for example consuming more fruits and vegetables, had led to them opting for home-cooked meals over processed options or takeaways, and embracing seasonal ingredients and recipes.

Research question 1c asks, *are there additional outcomes that FareShare is not currently accounting for?* The findings suggest that people who access FareShare food are achieving some additional outcomes that are not currently accounted for within FareShare's theory of change. These additional outcomes relate to **different food practices and reduced domestic waste**. For example, we heard from individuals who had learnt from each other, and from staff and volunteers about ways to minimize food waste by relying less on printed dates, and being more mindful of consumption habits, including ways to use leftovers. Therefore, it seems that there is some evidence that food offer also contributes to **increased food literacy** and **reduced food waste within the community**.

Outcome 4 and 5: individuals connect with others and feel part of their community and experience reduced social isolation.

We found evidence of a strong relationship between outcome 4, *connection with others* and outcome 5, which is about people *feeling part of their community and experiencing reduced social isolation*. Because of the strong relationship between these two outcomes, we discuss FareShare's impact on both within the current subsection.

The evaluation findings suggest that FareShare is making a considerable impact upon community connectedness and reducing social isolation. The survey data suggests that feeling part of the community (+78%) and less lonely (+66%) were both key outcomes that were being achieved as a direct result of accessing food from the charities that FareShare supplies to. As has been noted elsewhere in the report, the food provided appeared to be the initial draw that pulled people toward

³⁵ EUFIC (2011) Can Cooking skills be the key to health? [Link](#) [last accessed 15/11/23]



the service, and also a motivating factor that increased people's willingness to return. While the type of service, and the relational environment were found to be contextual factors that enabled the attainment of this outcome, the food itself was considered to be of high importance from the perspectives of those accessing the service, and so we can conclude that FareShare is making a strong contribution to the attainment of these outcomes, despite the organisation itself being relatively far removed from the direct recipients of the food they supply.


To understand this contribution more, some further discussion is required. We noted that within the survey data, there were differences in strengths of evidence in relation to outcome 4 (connection to others) and outcome 5 (feeling part of the community and experiencing less social isolation). It is also worth caveating the findings with consideration of how the findings fit within the broader research evidence base. Existing research evidence suggests that gender, age, and a person's occupation are all factors that can influence the extent to which food charities can redress loneliness³⁶. This suggests that different people experience connection to others in different ways. Connectedness to community (outcome 5) is considered by many to be a crucial step on a ladder towards reduced isolation and loneliness^{37,38}. Within the current evaluation, the survey findings indicated that there was slightly weaker evidence that people are experiencing outcome 5 (reduced isolation), but there was some evidence within the survey's qualitative responses, and within the deep dive site interviews to suggest that people accessing FareShare food are experiencing an increased sense of community. The evaluation concludes that from the perspective of people receiving food, FareShare are making a positive impact on people's sense of connection to each other, and some are experiencing reduced social isolation over time.

Research question three asks, *which types of organisations and food provisions are better at achieving social outcomes for individuals?* The evaluation findings in relation to this research question are complex and non-linear when it comes to the attainment of outcomes 4 and 5. Our findings suggest that FareShare's contribution to the attainment of the social outcomes (4 and 5) cannot be taken alone. This is because we found evidence of a number of external, but linked factors act as barriers and/or enablers to the attainment of a sense of connection to others, and the sense of feeling part of a community, and experiencing reduced social isolation as a result. First, the evaluation found that

³⁶ Rotenberg, K., Surman, E. and McGrath, M., (2021) Loneliness, food poverty, and perceived benefits of communal food consumption from a charity service. *Journal of poverty*, 25(5), pp.465-479.

³⁷ Chipuer, H.M., (2001) Dyadic attachments and community connectedness: Links with youths' loneliness experiences. *Journal of Community Psychology*, 29(4), pp.429-446.

³⁸ O'Rourke, H.M., Collins, L. and Sidani, S., (2018) Interventions to address social connectedness and loneliness for older adults: a scoping review. *BMC geriatrics*, 18(1), pp.1-13.



although FareShare currently categorises types of service provision, ranging from foodbanks to foodbank plus, to community fridges, larders, delivery services, and so on, the categorisations are often not a true reflection of the full offer that the service makes to those who access it. Also, the findings suggest that some types of services are more likely to foster a sense of community due to the type of services they are, and the aims and objectives of their own services. For example, the survey findings indicate that feeling a sense of belonging to community (outcome 5), is more likely to be achieved within community centres, and faith-based organisations, even if the food provision type is classed as ‘food only’. We noted too that some settings that do not provide formal referral routes or pathways to wider support services were achieving a type of social outcome that is not currently accounted for within FareShare’s existing theory of change. This outcome is particularly linked to outcomes 4 and 5 insofar as it is about connection to others, and about community, but this outcome would be better defined as community resilience and increased community capacity.

In answer to research question 1c, *are there social outcomes that FareShare is not currently accounting for*, we can conclude that yes, there is a further outcome that FareShare is not yet accounting for, and we have, as noted above, referred to this as **enhanced community resilience, and increased community capacity**. Interestingly, in relation to research question three, we noted that organisations/charities that provide low-cost food that is accessible to all, and where people are encouraged to make repeat visits are more likely to achieve this new social outcome than organisations where there are eligibility criteria. The deep dive sites were particularly insightful in this regard and showed evidence that this outcome was being achieved even in settings where there were no spaces allocated for socializing, and where there were no spaces available for people to sit, or to interact. We observed that because people were able to attend the same place weekly, and became accustomed to seeing the same faces, informal conversations would occur, during which ideas would be shared about how to use new and unusual foods, thereby increasing community capacity via the exchange of food tips, and recipe ideas. The common experience of navigating the cost-of-living crisis by accessing food in this way also appeared to create a sense of solidarity based on common experience. Over time, this appeared to have led to people experiencing feelings of community and belonging, and the emergence of informal support networks, where community members would check in on each other if they noted that someone had been absent from attending for a while. We also heard reports of people cooking extra food for those who had not appeared in the queue and taking this around as an offer of friendship and community. These findings align with existing academic literature which has explored the symbolic value of food³⁹, which can be a conduit

³⁹ Bourdieu, P., (1984) *A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.



for belonging and the sharing of which can communicate respect and care. In the current evaluation, we found that these themes related to the new outcome, which we have called community resilience. The findings of the evaluation therefore suggest that redistributed food is making an important social impact within some of the communities that receive it.

In relation to research question three, we noted that there were some differences in the types of connections/relationships that were being made across different types of food provision sites. Within deep dive site 1, a foodbank, people placed high importance on the relationships they had made with specific staff members. While a few had expanded their social networks and developed a sense of community by joining the church in which the foodbank is based, most focused on one-to-one interactions, and in our observations, we saw less evidence of interactions between people who were accessing food support. While the reasons, or relative significance of this were not clear, we considered that this may relate to a few external factors, including eligibility criteria, and the higher-than-average levels of social isolation among those accessing the charity, as well as the potential stigma involved in having to go through local authority eligibility assessments to receive a referral. We noted that site 1 offered formal routes to support. The qualitative methodology used in the deep dive sites meant that we did not obtain or analyse monitoring data to examine the longer-term outcomes that people were potentially achieving when they engaged with the formal supports offered within the sites. The short-term support that the foodbank plus site intends to provide could be a potential explanation for this finding as it provides less opportunity for the development of community. This cannot be known conclusively, however, and so some caution is required in the interpretation of this aspect of the evaluation findings. Notably, many participants from this site described the food they had received, and their interactions with staff as having been lifesaving. For some, it represented a turning point that cannot be discounted in terms of social value, and we assess that outcome 4 was being partially achieved, and that it is likely that outcome 5 would be achieved over time via interactions with the formal services.

The other two deep dive sites (sites 2 and 3) differed in their design and type of service, and yet, we noted some commonalities in the outcomes being achieved. In these sites, the food offer, and the way of distributing the food appeared to be creating a sense of community, and social integration which centred around the theme of solidarity. Those accessing these sites were in general,

Cairns, K., and Johnston, J., (2015) Choosing health: Embodied neoliberalism, post-feminism and the 'do-diet', *Theory and Society*. Vol. 44(2): 153-175.
Beagan, B., Chapman, G., Johnston, J., McPhail, D., Power, E., and Vallianatos, H., (2017) *Acquired Tastes: Why Families Eat the Way They Do*. British Columbia: University Press.



experiencing less acute poverty when compared to deep dive site 1, but the food offered meant that they were able to make household finances stretch further, and they were having to skip less meals as a result. Most described a sense of ‘all being in it together’ and connected over shared experience, including the impact of the cost-of-living crisis and the food itself. Waiting for food emerged from the evaluation research as being a key moment for the development of social connections. In two of the deeper dive sites, people began to queue for the food long before the charity opened and many participants in the interviews described arriving early to queue, and community members got to know the faces of those who would regularly attend.

In such circumstances, the food provided by FareShare was the factor that brought people together, since in one of the examples, the service offered food only and, in the survey, 44% of respondents accessed food support only yet the related outcomes (more part of the community, less lonely) had strong net scores. With the deep dives we observed that the social interactions and sense of connectedness centred around a notion of reciprocity, where people felt comfortable accessing food in this way on a regular basis because repeat use was encouraged, and because many had the sense that they were checking in on community members. Many also reflected an awareness that they were ‘all in the same boat’ due to the impact of the cost-of-living-crisis. The sense of both solidarity and reciprocity appeared to be offsetting stigma, as well as contributing to community resilience and capacity.

In the survey data, and the qualitative data, however, the beneficiaries who took part in the evaluation expressed strongly that the staff within each site were highly important when it came to making people feel at ease and feel cared about. This appeared to be the case regardless of the type of food provision, or classification of the organisation itself. Having social spaces, including queues where people could interact was one important factor, but the feeling of comfort and non-stigma communicated by the staff and volunteers appeared to be a conduit, or a gateway that enabled the solidaristic, empowered, resilient community to begin to form.

Outcome 6: improved health and wellbeing

The evaluation found some mixed responses from the survey and deep dive sites that accessing food support led to improved health and wellbeing. Physical health scored less strongly than the wellbeing measures, although, as has been demonstrated, several of the other outcomes mentioned thus far have a known link to improved health and wellbeing. The survey net scores related to these outcomes were:



- +75% reported improved wellbeing.
- +69% worry less about where the next meal is coming from.
- +66% reported reduced loneliness (closely tied to mental health).
- +66% reported having a healthier diet.
- +58% reported having more energy to function.
- +55% reported improved physical health.

Improved wellbeing was a commonly reported outcome across the survey and deep dive sites. This was multi-level. There was evidence that increased **food security significantly reduced stress and worry and was pronounced for those with children/families** (in the open-ended survey responses and deep dive sites). Additionally, the qualitative findings suggest that the day-in, day-out worry about food, and/or the costs of food had taken its toll on many respondents, who expressed their relief at having regular access to free/affordable food. For many, this was the most meaningful outcome and most helpful aspect of the support. This was also closely related to financial savings and being able to pay bills/reduce debt.

A further area contributing to improved wellbeing that emerged from the open-ended survey responses and the deep dive sites was **the pivotal role of accessing support**. This included the ability to connect with supportive volunteers and staff, access to additional support, connections with others in similar situations and for some, to build new friendships. The everyday connection with others in a similar situation and the emotional support within these relationships proved instrumental in contributing to overall improved wellbeing. In the survey findings, improved physical health was not as strong as increased wellbeing. It may be that addressing physical health concerns may require a more comprehensive support approach beyond the types of organisations in our survey. Notably, we observed a significant number of respondents living with life-limiting conditions and individuals with disabilities within our survey sample. They did not experience outcomes in the same way as non-disabled people did. This may indicate the potential need for tailored and specialised support in these areas.

We found evidence that more food variety, better quality food and more fruit and vegetables led to more opportunities for healthy eating and **healthier eating habits**. For example, almost everyone in the deep dive sites reported eating more healthily, even if they were healthy before.

Which outcomes are more meaningful to people accessing food than others?



Foremost, **individuals reported accessing the food itself, especially the ability to access previously unaffordable options and a wider variety of choices, including fruit and vegetables** is the most meaningful and important outcome for those accessing food support. This, in turn, provided additional benefits such as **financial relief, and reducing stress**, these however are secondary outcome. Additionally, a substantial number of those we heard from felt positive about **preventing food waste**.

Furthermore, the presence of supportive staff, volunteers, and fellow community members at these sites plays a significant role. This sense of support directly linked to a growing feeling of connection to their local community.

To determine which outcomes are more meaningful to people accessing food than others, we have drawn on the following findings:

- Net scores per outcome from the quantitative questions in the survey
- Number of mentions in responses to the open-ended qualitative questions in the survey relating to (a) the most important outcomes, and (b) what would have happened had food support not been accessed; and
- Feedback from interviewees at the deep dive sites.

The responses to the open-ended questions on the most important outcomes for respondents and asking what would have happened had support not been accessed tell a slightly different story. Food related outcomes, relating both to the ability to access food and the variety and healthiness of the food accessed, were mentioned most frequently in the survey and in the qualitative findings as being the most important outcome. In the survey, this was closely followed by 'financial savings' and 'improved mental health' which also received a high number of mentions as the most important outcome for respondents. The survey responses to the question on what would have happened without access to food further confirm the importance of these outcomes, with increased financial hardship, food poverty and deteriorating mental health being the most frequently mentioned outcomes. This finding was also echoed in the qualitative data, where people asserted that the food had helped to alleviate worries about where their next meal was coming from, and for others had alleviated financial pressures by helping household budgets stretch further. In the qualitative findings, connection to community for some, and to services for others had also had a positive impact by reducing feelings of social isolation.



Across the deep dive sites, the most important outcomes were similar: the food offer (low cost/free, variety, regular access etc), the formal and informal support offer from staff, volunteers and other individuals accessing food. Preventing food from going to waste also emerged very strongly in the Littlehampton site, where the organisation promoted this as its core mission. As has been noted, the qualitative findings suggest that again, improved access to food was the most meaningful outcome from the perspective of people accessing food. However, within the qualitative findings, the second most mentioned outcome related to outcomes 4 and 4, connection to others and a feeling of being part of a community

How people experience outcomes

Interesting insights emerged relating to the outcomes which people experienced because of accessing food support. It is important to recognise that individuals accessing food support do not experience outcomes in the same way.

Disabled people experience less strong outcomes across the board. This is likely to be because disabled people are a group who are known to be facing the highest levels of poverty in the UK⁴⁰. We might assume that whilst redistributed food is likely to be having a positive impact, the effects are difficult to distinguish because it is simply not enough to make a significant difference to the life experiences of this group. This may mean that FareShare wishes to focus its attention to organisations who have support mechanisms to address the needs and challenges faced by disabled people more moving forwards.

Older people had stronger scores related to reduced meal skipping and feeling better about stopping food from going to waste. **Younger people** fared better in terms of energy and health.

Global majority respondents tended to experience stronger outcomes than White British counterparts. The implications of this may be that FareShare and the organisations it works with should continue to support their diverse userbase and continue working with organisations that create inclusive safe environments.

⁴⁰ Emerson, E., Stancliffe, R., Hatton, C., Llewellyn, G., King, T., Totsika, V., Aitken, Z. and Kavanagh, A., (2021) The impact of disability on employment and financial security following the outbreak of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic in the UK. *Journal of Public Health*, 43(3), pp.472-478.



Those who were unemployed were more likely to report skipping fewer meals, to see their kids doing better at school, and to be eating more healthily because of food support. FareShare can continue to nurture this by working with organisations that address the challenges of unemployed people.

However, individuals claiming welfare benefits appear to be less likely to report improvements in physical health and a sense of community, and more generally report lower outcome scores. We are not sure why those claiming welfare report less strong outcome scores.

Are there additional outcomes being experienced by beneficiaries which FareShare is not currently accounting for in its theory of change?

We identified additional outcomes beyond FareShare's current theory of change, although the level of supporting evidence varies for each. These included feeling good stopping food from going to waste, additional outcomes for children and families and contributing towards reciprocity in communities.

Feeling good stopping food from going to waste (reciprocal gains): The most notable finding from the survey was that there were more positive responses to the outcome statement "I feel good knowing this food would otherwise go to waste" – an outcome for beneficiaries not included in the theory of change - than any other outcome statement included in the survey. This finding could be considered as 'reciprocal gains', and the findings suggest that those receiving food in this way experienced less stigma because there was a sense of reciprocity, of doing something good for the environment, and for society by utilising food that would otherwise have gone to waste. We chose to explore the concept of surplus food by adding a question on it into the survey. This was initially under the enabler section as a way of exploring stigma (feeling like you are playing a part in food waste reduction played a role in reducing stigma). However, we also added it to the outcome area as we felt it was an interesting area to explore. By doing this, we found that ultimately, preventing food from going to waste resonated deeply with people accessing food support.

At one of the deep dive sites, the food being surplus was part of the core messaging and it found strong resonance among those accessing food there. Moreover, it was apparent that many survey respondents and interviewees were initially motivated to access their organisations for this reason: to actively participate in reducing food waste. Others developed a heightened awareness of food waste



issues through their engagement with their services. This outcome area also played an important role in reducing stigma often associated with requiring food support. By framing the support service as a means of combatting food waste, the organisations not only address the food waste issue but also create a welcoming and stigma-free environment. These findings shed light on some ideas: First, there is a cross-generational concern among people in the UK about the food waste created under our current food system (even more pronounced for older people). Second, organisations have an opportunity to promote their services to tackle this issue and offering a dignified way for people to access food support without feeling stigmatised. Overall, these insights have implications for FareShare and its approach to promoting its services, especially considering that this dimension is not currently included in its theory of change regarding individuals. Incorporating the element of reducing food waste reduction into messaging and mission could potentially resonate strongly with both individuals and the broader community.

Additional outcomes for families and children: We found some interesting insight about families and children across the research. In the survey we specifically explored **'kids doing better at school'** and found some evidence (+58%) this was the case. However, beyond this, we found that food support also has positive impact on:

- **Improved family relationships:** Respondents consistently highlighted the strain that food insecurity placed on family life, resulting in increased stress. Accessing food support was frequently mentioned as a means of alleviating some of this.
- **Improved children's eating habits:** The ability to choose from a variety of food options, previously unaffordable, aides a smoother weaning experience (for babies) and for children in general, results in a better diet.

There were also a small number of examples of parents/carers and children enjoying seeing what food they had and making meals together. Individuals were also keen to stress to us how well the staff and volunteers treated the children at their sites, and so the welcome and interactions with staff are additional facilitators to attaining positive outcomes.

Becoming volunteers and contributing back to the community (reciprocity): In the survey, there were several mentions about those accessing the food support becoming volunteers and feeling like they were able to contribute back to the community, a recurring theme in this evaluation. This had many positive benefits including improved wellbeing.



Inter-related outcomes

As already discussed in this chapter, it may be helpful to understand how inter-connected the outcomes are. There is a very strong link between, for example, accessing affordable/free food and increased financial savings. These savings, in turn, reduce worry and stress. Furthermore, people access their supportive sites (staff, volunteers, other people and setting) and this in turn leads to increased sense of community.

Enablers

We discuss this fully in the next section, but the enablers are an essential feature in realising the outcomes. Detailing these in the theory of change would add more nuance and further demonstrate FareShare and the organisations' contribution.

Assumptions

Adding assumptions to the theory of change would also capture some of the complexity of FareShare's work. Assumptions are the underlying beliefs, hypotheses, or conditions that are considered to be true or necessary for the theory to work as intended. These assumptions are critical because they form the basis for the theory and influence the expected outcomes.

For FareShare, and from this evaluation, some relevant assumptions might relate to:

- **Food availability:** FareShare assumes that there is a surplus of food that can be collected and redistributed. Where this does not happen, the outcomes cannot occur.
- **Volunteers:** Many of the charity and community intermediaries relied on volunteers. An assumption might be that there will be a consistent and dedicated pool of volunteers available to collect, sort, and distribute food. Also, that they contribute to the positive environment, so important for reducing stigma.
- **Individual need:** There are many assumptions about need of food and who access the distributed food. This study has highlighted that the profile may have changed over the last few years.

What is FareShare's contribution towards achieving outcomes for individuals?

In answering this question, we have drawn on:



- a) The responses to the questions in the survey relating to the main reason for first accessing the food support organisation; the reasons for continuing to access the support; the factors helping the respondent to access food support/ most helpful aspect; and what would have happened without the food support; and
- b) Feedback from interviewees at the deep dive sites.

We have concluded our findings underscore FareShare's contribution to the outcomes we tested for, to varying degrees. However, they also highlight that it achieves these outcomes through a collaborative effort with multiple stakeholders. This includes the community and charity intermediaries, their trusted sites and compassionate staff and volunteers and the wider community. Where organisations receive food from other distributors, it is also more challenging to attribute outcomes solely to FareShare.

Why individuals initially access and continue to access their organisations

There was strong evidence of FareShare's contribution to outcomes for individuals given that 77% of respondents to the survey confirmed that the reason they first accessed the organisation from which they received food support was either to obtain affordable food support (50%), or to obtain emergency food support (27%). Similarly, the 'net score' of responses on the factors which explain why survey respondents were continuing to access the organisation showed that the food offer had the highest net score (+81%) while the wider support offer and meeting people/socialising received net scores of +61% and +42% respectively. However, the role of the organisation in creating the space is clearly key here. Therefore, though the food is the main draw here, the organisations still play a significant role.

What enables the outcomes

The responses to the question relating to the factors which help respondents to access food support, and the most helpful aspects of the support suggest that the organisations distributing the food also make some contribution to the achievement of outcomes, given that the following statements had three of the four highest net scores:

- The food support is offered at a place I know and trust (+85%)
- The food offered would have otherwise gone to waste (+84%)⁴¹

⁴¹ An outcome area that can be attributed to both FareShare for providing the surplus food and the organisations for facilitating its distribution.



- There are no eligibility criteria (+77%)

Factors directly related to FareShare's contribution had slightly lower (although still very positive):

- The food offered would have otherwise gone to waste (+84%)
- The food is good quality (+74%)
- The food is free (60%)⁴²

We include 'The food offered would have otherwise gone to waste' as a contributory factor for both FareShare and the organisations as the relationship here is inter-linked. Without the organisations, FareShare could not distribute the food to individuals to the same degree. Without FareShare, the organisations would not have the same volume of food to distribute. Therefore, both components, FareShare food, and the social support provided by the charities, is required to achieve social impact. We note that survey responses to the open-ended question on the most helpful aspect of the food support confirmed the importance of the organisations themselves with "a place people know and trust" and "convenience" being two of the top three most frequent responses. The third was "preventing food waste", something that would not be possible without FareShare's contribution and business model. Similarly, responses to the open-ended question on the most helpful aspect of the food support confirm FareShare's contribution makes, with frequent mentions of affordability, accessibility, variety and healthiness of the food accessed. There were high numbers of mentions of financial savings resulting from food support, particularly pertinent because of the cost-of-living crisis mentioned frequently. Therefore, the food itself makes a strong contribution to a variety of social outcomes.

The third most helpful aspect, based on the number of mentions in responses, was the additional support offered alongside the food including supportive staff, signposting, general advice, financial advice and pastoral care, reflecting the each charity's own contribution to the outcomes experienced. The non-judgemental and friendly environment provided by the sites, along with the associated reduction in stigma, was also frequently mentioned in relation to the nature of the setting in which the food was accessed.

Without the food support

⁴² Food via FareShare Go is free. The regional centres pay membership fees, however the fees are significantly lower than the market value of food.



Regarding the question, what would have happened without food support, we found strong evidence that people's financial situations would have worsened, and food insecurity would have increased. These closely intertwined outcomes relate to the food support, thereby highlighting FareShare's contribution in alleviating this.

Organisations receive food from other distributors

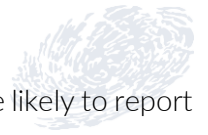
It is important to acknowledge that many organisations receive food from various sources including other agencies redistributing food, direct contributions from supermarkets, and community gardens, for example. This adds complexity to the factors influencing outcomes, highlighting the need for a more nuanced understanding when attributing outcomes directly to FareShare.

Which types of organisations and food provisions are better at achieving social outcomes for individuals?

While examining the data, it became apparent that there were not many significant distinctions between different types of organisations and their respective outcomes, or between various food offers and the outcomes they produced. Nevertheless, there were a few noteworthy findings that stood out. For instance, it was observed that organisations providing food only services and community fridges, had high outcome scores, particularly related to community connectedness. On the contrary, food banks with eligibility criteria (from the deep dive sites) did not score as well on connectedness. We draw on our cross-tabulation of responses to the survey relating to the outcomes experienced by respondents with the responses to the question about the type of organisation through which they accessed food support and compare against the deep dive sites.

In the survey, we found that there were a limited number of statistically significant scores when examining the relationship between the type of organisation and outcomes. It's important to acknowledge that certain types of organisations had low response rates, rendering cross-tabulation analysis not meaningful or reliable in those cases.

In terms of feeling part of a community, respondents were more likely to report experiencing this outcome if they sought support from a community centre (net score of +96%), accessed a food only service (+92%) or a faith organisation (+88%). This corresponds to the qualitative data from our second and third deep dive sites where social connectedness was very strong despite having no formal support beyond the food offer.



For respondents who have sought help from a community centre, they were much more likely to report feeling good about stopping food going to waste, with a very high net score of +95%. Similarly, respondents who have sought help from school had a net score of +97% for this outcome.

We also found that those accessing family support (a combination of childcare, school and out-of-school club) scored less well in the outcomes than other non-family centred provision. It may be that families experience deeper challenges and food insecurity than others.

Respondents who had sought support from a faith organisation were more likely to report that they had tried new foods, with a net score of +90%. Across other outcomes, faith organisations consistently reported higher outcomes compared to other groups. However, these differences were not always statistically significant, even with a large sample size.

There were no statistically significant findings related to type of food and outcomes. This was a multiple-choice question. We did test per type of food regardless, but we did not find any correlations. We used the deep dive sites as a way of offering additional insight into this area.

Contribution analysis

We can demonstrate how far FareShare is meeting its outcomes using the following contribution analysis table, drawing on all aspects of our research. Below, we offer some additional contextual factors and other possible explanations of change.



Table 5. Summary of contribution analysis

OUTCOME	SURVEY QUESTIONS	NET SCORE	QUALI COMMENTS IN SURVEY	DEEP DIVE SITES	ANY DIFFERENT BETWEEN GROUPS	ANY DIFFERENT BETWEEN TYPES OF ORGANISATION/FOOD SUPPORT (WHERE WE HAVE EVIDENCE)	LITERATURE
INDIVIDUALS ARE ABLE TO EXPERIENCE NEW FOODS WHICH INCREASES FOOD KNOWLEDGE	I HAVE TRIED SOME NEW FOODS	+81%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE	HAS ADDITIONAL BENEFITS FOR CHILDREN	CROSS TAB: STRONG EVIDENCE FOR FAITH ORGANISATIONS AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG (75%+) SCHOOLS, CHILDCARE, FAITH, FOOD SERVICE ONLY + COMMUNITY CENTRE DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE	IN THE FARESHARE ANNUAL IMPACT SURVEY 2022/23 ⁴³ IT WAS REPORTED THAT 84% OF ORGANISATIONS BELIEVED IT HELPED THEM ACCESS A WIDER VARIETY OF FOOD
	I CAN ACCESS MORE FRUIT AND VEG	+76%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR SCHOOLS, FOOD SERVICE ONLY, COMMUNITY CENTRE AND SOME FOR FAITH DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE	IN 2022/23, 84% OF ORGANISATIONS BELIEVED THAT THEY WERE ABLE TO OFFER MORE FRUIT AND VEGETABLES. ⁴⁴

⁴³ FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.

⁴⁴ FareShare. (2023). FareShare's Impact 2022-2023. [Link](#)



INDIVIDUALS CONNECT WITH OTHERS AND FEEL PART OF THEIR COMMUNITY	I FEEL MORE PART OF MY COMMUNITY	+78%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE	STRONG EVEN WHERE THERE IS NO FORMAL SUPPORT OFFER	<p>CROSS TAB: STRONG EVIDENCE: FOOD SERVICE ONLY, COMMUNITY CENTRE AND FAITH ORGANISATION)</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR COMMUNITY CENTRE; SOME FOR FOOD-ONLY AND FAITH; WEAKER FOR SCHOOL + CHILDCARE</p> <p>DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE</p>	THE MORE THAN MEALS REPORT FROM NATCEN SOCIAL RESEARCH (2016) FOUND THAT 82% OF INDIVIDUALS B REPORTED THAT ACCESSING FOOD AT THEIR CFM MADE THEM FEEL PART OF A COMMUNITY ⁴⁵
	I FEEL LESS LONELY	+66%	SOME EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – SOME EVIDENCE		<p>CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: SOME EVIDENCE FOR COMMUNITY CENTRES; WEAKER FOR OTHERS</p> <p>DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – SOME EVIDENCE</p>	THE RELEASING SOCIAL VALUE FROM SURPLUS FOOD REPORT (2020) FOUND THAT 72% OF ORGANISATIONS REPORTED THAT REDUCED ISOLATION AND LONELINESS WAS A KEY IMPACT ⁴⁶
INDIVIDUALS HAVE ACCESS TO BETTER FOOD	I CAN ACCESS MORE FRUIT AND VEG	+76%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE		<p>CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR SCHOOLS, FOOD SERVICE ONLY, COMMUNITY CENTRE, FAITH, CHILDCARE</p> <p>DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE</p>	

⁴⁵ Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.

⁴⁶ Blake, M. (2020). Releasing Social Value from Surplus Food, FareShare- British Red Cross.



	I HAVE A HEALTHIER DIET	+66%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE		<p>CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: SOME EVIDENCE FOR COMMUNITY ORGS AND FOOD SERVICE ONLY AND FAITH; WEAKER FOR SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE</p> <p>DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE</p>	THE 2022/23 ANNUAL IMPACT SURVEY 78% OF ORGANISATIONS BELIEVED THEY HELPED INDIVIDUALS HAVE ACCESS TO MORE NUTRITIOUS AND HIGHER QUALITY FOOD ⁴⁷
INDIVIDUALS ARE ABLE TO MAKE FINANCIAL SAVINGS	I HAVE LESS FINANCIAL PRESSURE	+73%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – STRONG EVIDENCE		<p>CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR COMMUNITY CENTRES, FAITH AND FOOD SERVICE ONLY; WEAKER FOR SCHOOLS AND CHILDCARE</p> <p>DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE</p>	IN 2022/23 93% OF CHARITIES BELIEVED PEOPLE WERE ABLE TO SAVE MONEY TO SPEND ON OTHER ESSENTIALS DUE TO THE SUPPORT THEY RECEIVED. ⁴⁸
	I SKIP NO MEALS	+57%	SOME EVIDENCE	N/A		<p>CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG</p> <p>AGREEMENT SCORES: WEAKER SCORES</p>	

⁴⁷ FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.

⁴⁸ FareShare. (2023). FareShare’s Impact 2022-2023. [Link](#)



	I SKIP FEWER MEALS	+57%	SOME EVIDENCE	N/A		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: WEAKER SCORES	NATCEN'S 2016 MORE THAN MEALS REPORT, FOUND THAT 80% OF INDIVIDUALS ATE MORE HOT MEALS AS A RESULT OF FARESHARE ⁴⁹
IMPROVED HEALTH & WELLBEING	I WORRY LESS ABOUT WHERE NEXT MEAL IS COMING FROM	+69%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – STRONG EVIDENCE		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR COMMUNITY CENTRE; SOME FOR SOME EVIDENCE FOOD SERVICE ONLY, FAITH DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE	EVIDENCE FROM THE FARESHARE MENTAL HEALTH/ ISOLATION PROJECT EVALUATION REPORT FOUND THAT ALMOST ALL OF THE PARTICIPANTS (92%) BELIEVED THEY HAD BETTER MENTAL HEALTH, PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF DECREASES IN FOOD-RELATED ANXIETY ⁵⁰
	MY OVERALL WELLBEING HAS INCREASED	+75%	STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG FOR SERVICE ONLY, FAITH, COMMUNITY CENTRE; WEAKER FOR SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE	NATCEN'S 2016 MORE THAN MEALS REPORT, FOUND THAT 87% OF INDIVIDUALS BELIEVED THE SUPPORT MADE THEM FEEL BETTER ⁵¹

⁴⁹ Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.

⁵⁰ Liverpool Charity & Voluntary Services. (2023). FareShare Mental Health / Isolation Project Evaluation Report, FareShare.

⁵¹ Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.



						DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE	
	I FEEL LESS LONELY	+66%	SOME EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – STRONG EVIDENCE		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: SOME EVIDENCE - COMMUNITY CENTRE, FOOD SERVICE ONLY + FAITH ORGS; WEAKER FOR SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – STRONG EVIDENCE	THE 2022/23 ANNUAL IMPACT SURVEY REPORTED THAT 88% OF ORGANISATIONS BELIEVED THEIR CLIENTS WERE LESS ISOLATED AND 83% BELIEVED IT HELPED PEOPLE HAVE COMPANIONSHIP ⁵²
	I HAVE MORE ENERGY TO FUNCTION DURING THE DAY	+58%	SOME EVIDENCE	N/A		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: SOME FOR COMMUNITY CENTRE, FOOD SERVICE ONLY + FAITH ORGS; WEAKER FOR SCHOOL AND CHILDCARE	THE 206 MORE THAN MEALS REPORT FOUND THAT 92% OF INDIVIDUALS BELIEVED THE SUPPORT “HELPED THEM FACE THE DAY AHEAD” ⁵³
	IMPROVED PHYSICAL HEALTH	+55%	SOME EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – WEAKER EVIDENCE		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: WEAKER SCORES	THE 2022/23 ANNUAL IMPACT SURVEY FOUND THAT 70% OF ORGANISATIONS IDENTIFIED IMPROVED PHYSICAL HEALTH AS AN OUTCOME ⁵⁴

⁵² FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.

⁵³ Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.

⁵⁴ FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.



						DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – WEAKER EVIDENCE	
ENVIRONMENTAL (NOT IN TOC)	I FEEL GOOD KNOWING THIS FOOD WOULD OTHERWISE GO TO WASTE	+89%	VERY STRONG EVIDENCE	LITTLE HAMPTON – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE		CROSSTAB: STRONG EVIDENCE - SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY CENTRES AGREEMENT SCORES: STRONG EVIDENCE FOR ALL DEEP DIVE: COMMUNITY FRIDGE/FREEZER – VERY STRONG EVIDENCE	88% OF THE ORGANISATIONS SAID USING SURPLUS FOOD REDUCED THE SIGMA AROUND FOOD SUPPORT. ⁵⁵
CHILDREN AND FAMILIES	MY KIDS ARE DOING BETTER AT SCHOOL	+58%	SOME EVIDENCE	N/A		CROSS TAB: NO STATISTICALLY SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPES OF ORG AGREEMENT SCORES: WEAK EVIDENCE FOR ALL	

⁵⁵ FareShare. (2023). FareShare's Impact 2022-2023. [Link](#)



For the agreement scores, we deemed the following:

- 75% and higher - strong evidence
- 65-74% - some evidence
- <64% - weaker evidence

NB the agreement scores were not statistically significant.

We did not include some of the types of organisations due to low response rates (<100) including:

- Advice / resource centre
- Day centre / drop-in centre
- Food growing / gardening
- Holiday provision
- Local authority
- Medical facility
- Out of school club (school age)
- Residential setting
- Training centres

NB, we did some separate analysis combing all the children's service organisations and include this in chapter [pp 41]. We found weaker outcomes for those accessing children's support services than those who did not.

Chapter six: conclusions and recommendations

From the evaluation we are able to draw a number of conclusions based on the current evidence. There are clearly a number of impacts for people who receive redistributed food via FareShare's partners and FareShare Go. Unsurprisingly the most significant reported impact is access to food for those who face food insecurity and poverty. This is the primary reason why people initially and continue to access food support. However increased food security is not the only impact and it is clear from the evidence in this report that significant secondary outcomes for people include alleviation of financial pressures, reduced stress and associated improvements in wellbeing and increased opportunities for a varied and healthy diet. Our contribution analysis indicates that there is strong evidence that access to redistributed food significantly contributes to these outcomes. There

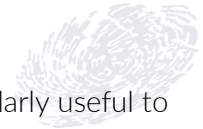


is also strong evidence that in the process of accessing food support there are benefits in relation to feeling part of a community and taking a sense of pride in reducing food waste.

Perhaps unsurprisingly these outcomes and impacts are linked and it is clear that accessing redistributed food is a facilitator for a number of subsequent benefits. This evaluation however also highlights the complexity of both people's needs, the systems in which they access food and the intersections of these. Because of this we have not been able to definitively identify whether certain organisations are better at achieving social outcomes. This is, in part, because of the nature of these organisations. As seen in this report those services which notionally 'only' provide food services (eg community pantries or supermarkets) also facilitate spontaneous opportunities for community development and cohesion. Conversely in those services which provide communal space for socialising we have been told the relationships with staff, rather than peers, are imperative. Given this we would urge caution in drawing conclusions, and making decisions, around the efficacy of different organisations in creating social impact.

Finally, we would conclude that, for the most part, the existing theory of change is fit for purpose and that outcomes align with these. However, there are opportunities for development and considerations given to the findings in relation to differing outcomes for people from both global majority groups, and disabled people should be addressed. With these conclusions in mind, we would make the following recommendations:

1. FareShare should review its theory of change to reflect on the learning from this evaluation. It may wish to develop both a narrative, allowing for more detail, and an evaluation framework to underpin future data collection. This would ensure that indicators in relation to beneficiary outcomes are included, and clear plan for collecting this data on an ongoing basis. FareShare may also wish to add some additional features such as the enablers explored in this report and add assumptions, beliefs and conditions necessary for the theory to work as intended. These assumptions are critical because they form the basis for the theory and influence the expected outcomes. A performance story may be a useful tool to complement the theory of change. An example of this, based upon this evaluation is included in [appendix 6](#).
2. There is evidence of other outcomes being achieved not included within the current theory of change. Given the complexity of the current theory of change, and the complexity of the psychological, social and economic needs of people accessing food services we might recommend that development of specific outcome chains for each of the main outcomes



FareShare is looking to achieve through redistributed food. It would be particularly useful to develop a logic model to explore outcome 9, connection to others to determine whether community resilience and capacity to provide informal support; community connectedness, and increased access to formal and informal supports should be added as new outcomes, or components of outcome 9. The evaluation findings suggest that FareShare are making a contribution that supports beneficiaries to attain these three new outcomes, so examining whether these should be added as part of the theory of change would be beneficial.

3. While this evaluation has provided evidence of approaches that work well to engage people who are accessing FareShare food in evaluations of this kind. We recommend that the lessons learned about ways to engage direct beneficiaries/end recipients of food be taken forward to inform future evaluations. We are aware that FareShare periodically collects data from the organisations it works with. Moving forwards, the voice of individuals should be included as much as possible. This could be, for example, through a short survey with a sample of an organisation's beneficiaries. The key questions should focus on individuals' current situation, what has changed (recognising from our survey that more and more people are affected by the cost-of-living crisis), how the organisations are supporting them and so on. To enhance understanding further, the organisations could also provide demographic information about individuals accessing their service. This data will we enable FareShare to build a more detailed profile of those who require its food support and how these changes over time.
4. The current evaluation has demonstrated that the food FareShare provides is a crucial factor that encourages people to engage with charities. The data and insights provided in this report, however, indicate that there are other contributing factors that lead to the attainment of social outcomes, many of which relate to how charities operate, whether or not they have social spaces, and the relationships they develop with people accessing food. As such, when examining their impact, FareShare should place greater emphasis on recognising the importance of its relationship with organisations. While FareShare's food leads to a range of strong outcomes for individuals, it is essential to acknowledge that charities and community organisations play a pivotal role in enabling these outcomes. This may have implications for future planning and engagement of organisations in planning.
5. In terms of design of future services, FareShare may wish to consider how to (i) capitalise on benefits for people from global majority (ii) increase benefits for disabled people (iii) consider



additional support for families (iv) consider how organisations can support – for example signpost/refer/support the most socially isolated.

6. The findings of this evaluation suggest that categorising services is complex, and the categories are not always a good fit for the type of services charities are providing. Further, many charities who provide food only, and have no offer of formal referral routes to other services are making a strong social impact by encouraging the development of informal support networks, where community members make suggestions to each other on how and where to access services/support to meet their needs. We understand that FareShare may need to consider which organisations to distribute through to maximise social impact, but we suggest that when doing so, careful consideration is given to how effectively services are categorised. Developing logic models that clearly capture how and where FareShare can maximise impact for very specific psychological, social and economic outcomes is likely to help with this. The current evaluation also demonstrates that the relational environment where food is provided is an enabling factor that supports the attainment of social outcomes. For example, when food is accessed in a non-judgemental and stigma free way, people are more likely to open up, interact and begin to connect with other community members. FareShare may want to consider the impact that eligibility criteria may have, as the current evaluation shows that specific social outcomes, such as connectedness to community is more likely to be achieved in settings that provide free or low-cost food to all, without the requirement for a referral. We note, however, that this could have implications, as it could exclude those in crisis, who may not have the social connections to know about places that offer low cost, or free foods, such as social supermarkets etc.

7. FareShare should understand that while wraparound services, and formal referrals into third sector and statutory services to meet health and social care needs are likely to remain important, charities that foster a sense **of community belonging and connectedness** can also make an important contribution to meeting the needs of those within the community. Supporting charities that have the right conditions to foster a sense of solidaristic community, and/or to build on community assets is one way that FareShare could maximise its social impact. Identifying these charities is likely to be challenging. Key factors to look for when assessing new applications from charities who would like to receive FareShare food:
 - How do people access the food?
 - Are referrals required?



- What, if any, is the eligibility criteria?
- Is there a queuing system? If so, a description will enable an assessment to be made of the role and function of the queue in social impact terms.
- Are there informal spaces where people congregate?
- How do people hear about the charity? Are recommendations from friends and family common?

The evaluation findings indicate that FareShare's current mechanisms for classifying types of charity and types of food distribution may require careful consideration as some charities that appear to be food only may also be providing formal and informal routes to additional support. The above indicators, however, may help to identify the charities most likely to make a positive contribution to developing community assets, as well as to creating informal support strategies within communities. This highlights the value of informal support structures.

8. Reflections on carrying out future self-evaluation

Involving the charity and community intermediaries in any future evaluation design could add value. This could include in the design of any future FareShare evaluation/research but also in what data FareShare might be able to collect moving forwards to ensure the voice of individuals accessing food support is systematically included.



Appendix one: Data tables

Question	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	N=
Food offer	1%	3%	11%	48%	36%	2529
The wider support offer	3%	6%	21%	45%	25%	2225
Meeting people	7%	11%	22%	41%	19%	2187

Question	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	N=
Eat healthier diet	1%	8%	18%	44%	30%	2170
Eat more fruit & veg	3%	5%	7%	44%	40%	2287
Try new foods	2%	5%	5%	51%	37%	2216
Skip no meals	3%	11%	15%	44%	27%	1936
Skip fewer meals	3%	12%	13%	45%	27%	1939
Have more energy	2%	8%	22%	46%	22%	2056
Less financial pressure	2%	7%	10%	48%	34%	2206
Kids doing better at school	3%	5%	26%	42%	24%	1245
Feel good stopping food waste	2%	1%	5%	33%	59%	2327
Feel part of community	1%	4%	12%	48%	35%	2194
Improve physical health	2%	9%	23%	45%	21%	2004
Feel less lonely	2%	7%	15%	46%	29%	1979
Worry less about food	3%	7%	11%	48%	31%	2065
Increase overall wellbeing	2%	4%	13%	52%	29%	2125



Question	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	N=
The food is free	3%	7%	20%	42%	28%	2038
Paying a small fee makes me feel that I am contributing to the service	3%	4%	19%	48%	25%	1833
The food is good quality	1%	3%	18%	53%	25%	2222
There is no eligibility criteria on who can access the food here	2%	3%	13%	47%	35%	2167
There is choice on the food support you get (for example snacks, bags to take home)	2%	5%	20%	48%	25%	2087
The place I access food is convenient to me	1%	2%	10%	53%	34%	2222
The food support is offered at a place I know and trust	1%	2%	10%	50%	38%	2235
The food offered would have otherwise gone to waste	1%	2%	10%	50%	37%	2218
I can get support on other issues I am facing (wellbeing/benefits/training, etc)	3%	5%	19%	46%	26%	1803

Appendix two: Survey wording

Introduction

We would like to invite you to share your views about the food and support you receive from our organisation.

This survey is for people accessing food services (and not community organisation staff).



We are offering a **PRIZE DRAW** to participants with the chance to win one of 10 x £15 food vouchers. Please find the details at the end of the survey.

A few more points: (i) The questionnaire is for **adults aged 18 and over, who have accessed food services at least three times** (ii) It is **anonymous**. Find out more about the survey [here](#) (iii) It will close 31 August.

NCVO and Rocket Science are running this survey. This research has been commissioned by FareShare.

For any questions, please email NCVO's project manager: Sarah at sarah.menzies@ncvo.org.uk or 07377 549451

[NCVO's privacy notice](#)

The survey

About the support you receive

1. Which region is your organisation based in? For example, Sussex or Highlands and Islands. You can write the city/town or village if you are unsure.

2. What type of organisation do you access food support from? Please select the main activity that the organisation delivers.

<input type="checkbox"/>	Advice / resource centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food growing / gardening	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prison
<input type="checkbox"/>	Childcare (pre-school/ nursery/ childminder)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Food service only (e.g., food bank, pantry, meals)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Holiday provision, e.g., summer activity club for children (school age)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Local authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	Residential setting
<input type="checkbox"/>	Day centre / drop-in centre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Out of school club (school age)	<input type="checkbox"/>	School
<input type="checkbox"/>	Faith organisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Medical facility	<input type="checkbox"/>	Training centre
<input type="checkbox"/>	Something else not listed, please describe:				



3. What type of food support have you accessed at this organisation in the last 3 months. Tick all that apply.

<input type="checkbox"/> Food bank/parcel collection	<input type="checkbox"/> Pantry/community cupboard/community shop
<input type="checkbox"/> Food parcel delivery	<input type="checkbox"/> Prepared meals (to be eaten at home)
<input type="checkbox"/> Cooking lessons	<input type="checkbox"/> Cafe/ meals (eaten in, for example, your community organisation/church)
<input type="checkbox"/> Snacks	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Something else not listed, please describe

4. What was the main reason you first accessed this organisation?

<input type="checkbox"/> I accessed the organisation for emergency food support	<input type="checkbox"/> I accessed the organisation for support with a specific issue such as mental health, training or advice
<input type="checkbox"/> I accessed the organisation for affordable food support (for example free or low-cost food)	<input type="checkbox"/> I wanted to meet people/socialise
<input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify)	<div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px;"></div>

5. How important are the following factors in explaining why you **continue to access** this organisation? Tick one option per line

	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Not relevant to me
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The food offer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The wider support offer (beyond food)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
To meet people/ socialise	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>					

What has changed for you as a result of accessing food support

How far do you agree with the following statements. Please select one option per line.

6. Changes related to food.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Not relevant to me
I have been able to access more fruit and veg	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have a healthier diet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have tried some new foods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I skip fewer meals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I don't have to skip meals any longer	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Changes related to wellbeing.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Not relevant to me
I worry less about where my/my family's next meal is coming from	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



My overall wellbeing has increased	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel more part of my community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I feel less lonely	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My physical health has improved	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Changes related to your wider life.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Undecided	Agree	Strongly agree	Not relevant to me
I feel good knowing this food would otherwise go to waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have less financial pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I have more energy to function during the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
My kids are doing better at school	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Please comment on any of the above and/or add any further changes



What helps you to access the food support

We would like to understand which elements help you access your service.

10. How important are the following factors for you? Tick one option per line

	Not important at all	Of little importance	Of average importance	Very important	Absolutely essential	Not relevant to me
The food is free	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Paying a small fee makes me feel that I am contributing to the service	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The food is good quality	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is no eligibility criteria on who can access the food here	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
There is choice on the food support you get (for example snacks, bags to take home)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The place I access food is convenient to me	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The food support is offered at a place I know and trust	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The food offered would have otherwise gone to waste	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
I can get support on other issues I am facing (wellbeing/benefits/training, etc)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Please comment on what the most helpful aspect of this support is



Final questions about the service and changes

12. For you, what is the most meaningful change you have experienced as a result of accessing food support here?

13. What would have happened if you had not been able to access food support here?

14. Is there anything else you would like to say about the changes to your quality of life or health you have experienced as a result of the food support you have accessed?

About you

It's important for us to understand who is answering this survey so that we know how well we are reaching a diverse group of people.

Please note that your responses to these questions are strictly confidential and will be used for the purposes of this research only. We would appreciate if you could fill out this section, but we understand if you are short on time or would prefer not to. If that is the case, please skip to the end of the survey.

15. What is your age?

<input type="checkbox"/>	18-24	<input type="checkbox"/>	45-54	<input type="checkbox"/>	75-84
<input type="checkbox"/>	25-34	<input type="checkbox"/>	55-64	<input type="checkbox"/>	85+
<input type="checkbox"/>	35-44	<input type="checkbox"/>	65-74		

16. Which of these best describes your gender identity?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Male	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say
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<input type="checkbox"/>	Female	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer to self-define/ other, please describe
<input type="checkbox"/>	Non-binary		

17. Which one of the following best describes your ethnic group or background?

<input type="checkbox"/>	White: English/ Welsh /Scottish/Northern Irish /British	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other mixed/ multiple ethnic background (pls specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British: African
<input type="checkbox"/>	White: Irish	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British: Indian	<input type="checkbox"/>	Black or Black British: Caribbean
<input type="checkbox"/>	White: Gypsy or Irish Traveller	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British: Pakistani	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Black/African/ Caribbean background
<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other White background (pls specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British: Bangladeshi	<input type="checkbox"/>	Arabic
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed: White and Black Caribbean	<input type="checkbox"/>	Asian or Asian British: Chinese	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other ethnic group (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed: White and Black African	<input type="checkbox"/>	Any other Asian background (pls specify)		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Mixed: White and Asian				

18. Are your day-to-day activities limited because of a health problem or disability which has lasted, or is expected to last, at least 12 months?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, limited a lot	<input type="checkbox"/>	No
<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes, limited a little	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say

19. Which of the following best describes your current working status?



<input type="checkbox"/>	Employed (self-employed or by an employer)	<input type="checkbox"/>	Long-term sick/disabled	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student
<input type="checkbox"/>	Unemployed	<input type="checkbox"/>	Looking after the home	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Retired or semi-retired	<input type="checkbox"/>	Caring for family members		

20. How many dependent children do you have, if any?

<input type="checkbox"/>	0	<input type="checkbox"/>	2	<input type="checkbox"/>	4+
<input type="checkbox"/>	1	<input type="checkbox"/>	3		

21. Do you have caring responsibilities, beyond parenting?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say
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22. Do you receive any state benefits or tax credits?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>	No	<input type="checkbox"/>	Prefer not to say
--------------------------	-----	--------------------------	----	--------------------------	-------------------

23. Before we proceed, we would like to acknowledge that the following question may be difficult or triggering for some individuals.

Please take care of yourself throughout the survey. If you need support, we encourage you to reach out to a trusted friend, family member, or a staff member at the place you access food. If you prefer not to respond to this question, please skip to the end of the survey.

We would like to understand whether you identify as any of the following. Please tick as many as apply.

<input type="checkbox"/>	I have or am experiencing mental health-related issues	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am on a low income
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have been affected by domestic abuse	<input type="checkbox"/>	I identify as LGBTQIA
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have/am experiencing difficulties associated with substance use	<input type="checkbox"/>	I am former service personnel e.g., ex-army
<input type="checkbox"/>	I have been affected by human trafficking and/or sexual exploitation	<input type="checkbox"/>	I have criminal convictions (current or recent past)
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am care experienced	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other (please specify)



<input type="checkbox"/>	I identify as having learning disabilities	
<input type="checkbox"/>	I am from a refugee or asylum-seeking background	
<input type="checkbox"/>	None of the above	

Appendix three: Interview topic guide

Introduction

My name is [NAME] and I'm a Research Consultant for Rocket Science. We are an independent research and evaluation organisation. We have been commissioned by FareShare to conduct an evaluation to explore the perspectives of people over the age of 18 who have received food via the charity at least 3 times. We would like to know more about your experiences and the difference that the food or the service has helped you to make. We are keen to find out about whether the food you were offered motivated you to engage with the service, and what changes you have experienced, if any, as a result of accessing the food.

We can either take notes, or record today's interview/focus group using an audio recording device. If you agree to being recorded, we will make a transcript of the interview/focus group. What this means is that we will have a written record of the interview/focus group. We use this to help with our analysis. All interview transcripts and research notes will be pseudo-anonymised. This means that we will remove all identifiable information like names, place names, and sometimes organisation names. Transcripts are uploaded onto our secure server, and they'll be destroyed once the evaluation is complete and the final report has been signed off. We delete the audio recordings as soon as we have the transcripts. This interview/focus group is totally voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without needing to give a reason. You can also withdraw the things you have said later by contacting me and letting me know that you'd like your answers to be taken out. The findings from all the interviews and focus groups will be used to write a final report. While we take all possible steps to protect your identity in the final reports, there is always a slight possibility that people who know you really well might be able to identify you from the stories you tell. If you are worried about this, please let me know and I can avoid using direct quotes from you in the final report.

Have you had enough information about the research and evaluation?

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions?

Are you still happy to take part in the interview/focus group?

Do you have any questions?

Do you consent to being audio recorded?

The service/type of service

*Why did you first access the service? Was food one of the main reasons that you came to this organisation?

How would you describe the circumstances that led you to access food?



**When you come to access food from this organisation, what is the most important thing for you? What's most important?

How do you feel about accessing food in this way?

*Does knowing that the food would otherwise have gone to waste affect how you feel?

*Why do you continue to access the service? Is it for the food, the wider offer of services, to socialize, or for other reasons?

What made you choose this service? Did you feel that you had choices?

The symbolic value of food

*What did being offered food mean to you?

How did being offered food make you feel?

*Would you say that being offered food helped you to feel more connected to the service and/or the people here?

*Within this service, do you eat together, or does the service give you food to take home with you? How important is that to you?

*Thinking now about family, community and culture, what (if any) would you say the benefits or challenges of receiving food in this way are?

*Have you taken up any of these other services? Has this led to any changes in your life?

*Since coming here, have you found it easier to engage with other services? If so, which ones?

Food provision

Would you say that you are offered choice in terms of the food that you receive? How important is that? Why?

*Are you able to access better quality food/more healthy options now, compared to before you began accessing FareShare food?

*Have you been offered any foods which you have not had before? Have you learned anything new about food you are already familiar with (e.g. new ways of cooking or preparing food items, food nutrition, etc.)

Does the food you receive meet your dietary requirements/ health requirements?
Would you say that the food you receive is culturally appropriate?

*Would you say that receiving this food has had a positive impact on your family? In what ways?

[If relevant] has receiving the food helped you with parenting, or with managing the needs of your family?

*What impact has the cost-of-living crisis had on your life and your access to food? Has accessing food here helped to ease financial pressures? Has receiving this food helped to ease financial pressures? Has it freed up funds to help you to be able to buy other things?

Has having access to this food helped your physical health?

*Would you say that you now have access to a wider range of healthy foods than you did before accessing FareShare food? How important is this to you?

Intrinsic outcomes

*Do you think coming here has made it easier for you to meet and engage with other people?

*Can you describe any impacts that you've noticed in relation to your mental health, or mental well-being since engaging with the service? Can you say a little more about this?

Would you say that your confidence has changed since coming here? Why? What has contributed to you feeling that way, do you think? Again, do you think that is about the food,



or is it something to do with the service itself? How important is the food in terms of how you feel?

Extrinsic social outcomes

Since receiving the food/accessing the service, have you taken up any volunteering roles? How important is it to you that you are accessing food that would otherwise have gone to waste?

Since receiving the food/accessing the service, have you taken up an employed role, or started any training programmes?

*In what ways, if any, do you think the food contributed to you being able to do this?

The contribution

*Thinking now about some the changes you describe... what do you think has helped you the most?

*What other support are you receiving via this service, or others? To what extent would you say the food itself has helped you to make positive changes in your life? How important has that been? Why?

Closing

*Thinking now about the food itself, and the service that provided it... is there anything that you would like to have been done differently? In what ways would that have helped it to make a more positive impact on your life?

Is there anything that I've not covered that you think it would be important for us to understand?

Is there anything that you would like to add?

Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to speak to me today. Your experience and views are incredibly helpful to us. Do you have any questions for me before we close? [Leave contact details in case participant later wants to withdraw their data].

Questions for use in quick, on-the-spot, onsite interviews where participant time is limited

Question

When you come to access food from this organisation, what is the most important thing for you? What is most valuable aspect of the experiences that you've had here? Why?

How do you feel about accessing food in this way?

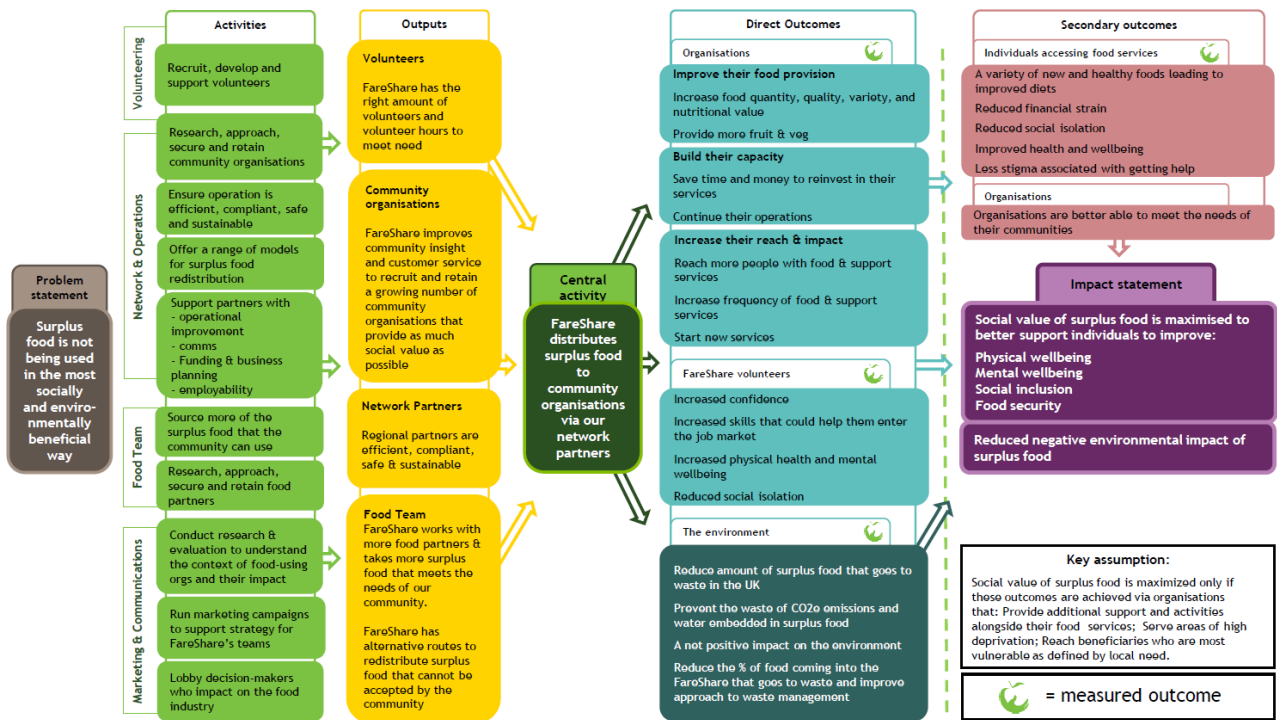
Does knowing that the food would otherwise have gone to waste affect how you feel?

What impact has the cost-of-living crisis had on your life and your access to food? Has accessing food here helped to ease financial pressures?

How much choice do you have in terms of the food you receive? How important is that to you, and why?



Appendix four: theory of change



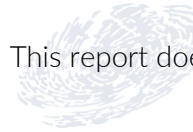
Appendix five: summary of key reports



FareShare provided 7 reports which were used to inform the desk research that was conducted as part of the contribution analysis. Each of these reports contributed to the creation of the 'performance story' that was tested and examined via the primary data collection. The reports are described and summarised below.

- **2022/23 Annual Impact Survey Results-** This document summarises the survey results from FareShare's impact survey for the 2022 calendar year. It includes a summary of the demographics of the organisation FareShare works with (including regional centre, charity status, how many people it supports, how much food they receive). It also presents information on the activities of the organisations and their opinions about working with FareShare.
- **2021/22 Annual Impact Survey-** This covers similar content to the 2022/23 survey. In this document the results are compared to that of 2020/21. This survey also looks at the demographics, opinions, and activities of the partner organisations. Similar to the above survey, the figures presented are based on the organisation's view of individual impact, not participant's views of impact.
- **FareShare Merseyside Mental Health / Isolation Project Evaluation-** An evaluation of FareShare and Mersey Care NHS Foundation partnership's activities. It examines how/ if the food supplied by FareShare impacts on mental health and isolation in Liverpool, and where and how this is most effective. This evaluation used data from consultation with 142 individuals (123 service users) from 6 frontline organisations. It examines the impact of food services on those accessing the service and the staff working at these organisations. Limited because it is unclear what contribution is made by FareShare and what the impact of these organisations would be without support from FareShare.
- **FareShare Family: Strengthening the FareShare Membership Proposition-** This report from 2017 examines the organisational and operational structure of FareShare and the experience of working with FareShare for members across its network. It highlights areas core business areas where improvements may be required including improving the information on overall membership, central set of membership criteria, and more data on member's locations and complaints. Discusses improvements of the FareShare service that could be

made including recipe cards, offering food safety courses, and non-food items. This report doesn't really discuss any outcomes for those individuals who access FareShare service, all at the organisational level.




- **More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food**- Executive summary of a report from 2016 about FareShare's impact across the UK. Presents findings from survey of FareShare's clients (Community Food Members).
- **Releasing Social Value from Surplus food**- Examines the impact of British Red Cross funding on FareShare to tackle loneliness and isolation. Includes case studies of the different organisations that receive food from FareShare.
- **The Socio-Economic Impact of the Work of FareShare**- Report from 2018 which estimates the social value of FareShare's work. They estimate that FareShare generates as much as £50.9 million in social-economic impact. Comprised of £6.9 million in social value for the beneficiaries and £44.0 million in savings for the state.


Contribution analysis: evidence from existing FareShare reports related to social outcomes



Citation	Outcome 1: improved access to food	Outcome2: financial savings	Outcome 3: experiencing new foods	Outcome 4: connecting to others and feeling part of the community
<p>FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.</p>	<p>Over three-quarters (78%) of organisations believed FareShare helped them access more nutritional food and better-quality food (77%). A large majority of organisations (84%) said it helps them have access to more fresh fruit</p>		<p>84% of the organisations believed FareShare helped them access more variety of food and 88% of organisations believed it helped people access food they could not normally afford</p>	<p>88% of organisations believed it helped people feel part of their local community</p>



<p>Wallace Marketing. (2022). A Report on FareShare's Annual Impact Survey 2021/22, Wallace Marketing.</p>	<p>75% of the respondents believed that clients could have a more balanced and healthy diet</p>	<p>Almost half (46%) of the organisations distributed non-food items and one-quarter of FareShare clients (26%) offered financial/ debt advice and 65% of the organisations signposted financial / debt advice. Almost all (91%) of the organisation believed that it helped individuals save money to put towards other essentials.</p>	<p>84% of respondents to the survey reported that they were able to try new food</p>	<p>95% of respondents felt that food services helped individuals feel like they were not forgotten and that someone cared about them. 84% felt that it helped people feel part of their local community. However, 17% believed it did not have an effect on improving individuals' sense of companionship.</p>
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Citation	Outcome 1: improved access to food	Outcome2: financial savings	Outcome 3: experiencing new foods	Outcome 4: connecting to others and feeling part of the community
<p>Liverpool Chariry & Voluntary Services. (2023). FareShare Mental Health / Isolation Project Evaluation Report, FareShare.</p>	<p>Individuals receiving food had access to better ingredients, more information on healthy diets and cooking, and inspiration to try new recipes. In addition, eating in a communal setting would found to promote better dietary habits than eating alone, as cooking for one person was believed to reduce motivation and thus nutrition of the meals.</p>	<p>Providing food helps individuals save money, and promotes engagement in other activities as cost is less of a barrier. Income that would usually be spent of food can go to other essentials such as heating and transport. Lessons from the CFM also help individuals gain skills in meal planning and saving on food costs. Additionally, the other support accessed by individuals through the centres helped improve financial situations through access to</p>	<p>Individuals were supported to try new recipes and cook new foods</p>	<p>Accessing support at the centres helps individuals feel more connected to and engaged with their communities, this was true for those receiving food parcels and food-based activities. It also provided opportunities for peer support and socialisation.</p>




Citation	Outcome 1: improved access to food	Outcome2: financial savings	Outcome 3: experiencing new foods	Outcome 4: connecting to others and feeling part of the community
		accommodation and welfare advice.		
Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.	59% of FareShare clients eats more fruit and vegetables and 46% eat more meat since accessing a CFM. Over 80% of clients also eat more hot meals as a result of FareShare. The organisations feed over 211,000 people with nutritious meals every week.	75% of clients save money by eating in a CFM and almost 40% said they would be unable to buy food.		82% of clients felt that they eating meals at a CFM helped them feel part of their community



Citation	Outcome 1: improved access to food	Outcome2: financial savings	Outcome 3: experiencing new foods	Outcome 4: connecting to others and feeling part of the community
<p>Blake, M. (2020). Releasing Social Value From Surplus Food, FareShare- British Red Cross.</p>	<p>FareShare deliveries have a good range of fruit and vegetables. One client reported how without FareShare they would not serve complete meals. Also, for many children accessing the services, who are not eligible for free school meals, the meals supplied in the centre is the only meal they will have.</p>	<p>The money people save on buying food can allow individuals to participate in more social events with neighbours.</p>	<p>Many of the surplus foods may be new to individuals/ communities and so FareShare increases knowledge about different foods and how they can be cooked</p>	<p>Accessing the support creates opportunities to socialise, which helps individuals feel part of their communities and less isolated. The food services reportedly help breakdown barriers in the communities and between groups.</p>



Citation	Outcome 1: improved access to food	Outcome2: financial savings	Outcome 3: experiencing new foods	Outcome 4: connecting to others and feeling part of the community
Davies, W., et al. (2018). The Socio-Economic Impact of the Work of FareShare, New Economics Foundation Consulting.	The Community Food Members (CFMs) provide services to 300,000 individuals. One school liaison officer highlighted how it helped supply 30-40 families in their school with food. Another organisation said that they have been able to improve the nutrition of the food offered. The social value created by improved nutrition and diet is equal to £7,321,236	They estimated that the value created by improved financial situation is (£18,113 per year). One case study highlighted how many clients would not be able to buy food without FareShare. The social value created by improved financial situation is £18,113		The social value created by improved social relationships is £2,520,491



Citation	Outcome 5: reduced social isolation	Outcome 5: reduced social isolation	Outcome 6a: improved mental health and wellbeing	Outcome 6b: improved physical health
<p>FareShare. (2023). Annual Impact Survey Results 22/23.</p>	<p>88% of organisations believed their work made people feel less isolated and a similar percentage (83%) felt it provided people with friendships</p>		<p>81% of organisations reported that their services resulted in improvements in mental health, and 70% of organisations believed it improved physical health. 74% of organisations signposted to mental health services and 66% signposted to health services.</p>	

Wallace Marketing. (2022). A Report on FareShare's Annual Impact Survey 2021/22, Wallace Marketing.

86% of organisations believed individuals felt less isolated



79% of organisations believed the service helped improve mental health and 68% believed it helped improve physical health. Conversely, 30% were neutral on if the services improved physical health. Additionally, 41% of organisations also offered mental health support and 64% signposted these services

<p>Liverpool Chariry & Voluntary Services. (2023). FareShare Mental Health / Isolation Project Evaluation Report, FareShare.</p>	<p>"Providing food-based services in a community setting appears to be a key contributor... to reduced isolation." Also, many widows who accessed the service felt that it made them feel less isolated and improve their mental health.</p>	<p>Many of the volunteers in Merseyside were asylum seekers. The report found that volunteering helped them improve their language skills and connections with the local community</p>	<p>Almost all the participants (92%) believed the food services improved their mental health, as it decreases food-related anxiety and increased confidence. Additionally, accessing support from the centres helped reduce depression and improved stability.</p>	
<p>Mabelis, J., Montagu, I., & Reid, S. (2016). More than Meals: Making a Difference with FareShare Food, NatCen Social Research.</p>			<p>Half (52%) of the clients believed eating at the CFM positively affected their physical health and almost all (92%) believed it "helped them face the day ahead." 87% of the clients believed is made them feel better.</p>	
<p>Blake, M. (2020). Releasing Social Value From Surplus Food, FareShare- British Red Cross.</p>	<p>72% of organisations believed that one of the main outcomes of their work was reduced isolation and loneliness</p>	<p>Being able to give back to the local community helps individuals feel less isolated. Also, the act of volunteering helps people get out of their house, thus reducing isolation and</p>		



		loneliness. Through volunteering people build social networks and are more connected with their community		
Davies, W., et al. (2018). The Socio-Economic Impact of the Work of FareShare, New Economics Foundation Consulting.			Social value created by improved mental health and wellbeing is £2,102,000 and £1,307,236 for physical health	

Appendix six: example performance story



The performance story

FareShare distributes food to charity and community organisations or facilitates access to supermarkets, among other channels.

In the UK, a substantial number of individuals, including those in-work, struggle with food insecurity and its associated hardships. People turn to food support organisations. Their continued engagement is driven by the food offer, including the variety and quality of the food available. A key enabler is the trustworthiness and accessibility of these organisations. Organisations are known and trusted and, in a place, that they are convenient to individuals. Notably, when eligibility criteria are absent, there tends to be less stigma attached to seeking food support. Additionally, the culture established by the staff, volunteers and the physical setting all play a key role in reducing stigma. Accessing free or affordable, high-quality food brings about immediate benefits: A wider variety of food options, increased access to fruit and vegetables, improved dietary choices and enhanced physical well-being. This, in turn, reduces concerns about the ability to eat and going hungry for individuals and families. The savings people make through access to the food not only allows them to meet other essential financial obligations but also result in a significant reduction in overall stress levels. The organisations play an important role in enabling outcomes related to social connectedness, although the food offer remains central to this effect. A surprising finding from our research was that social connectedness thrives in places where there is no additional formal support offer. Organisations, through their staff, volunteers and the spaces/settings (informal or formal) they provide, allow for connection, making people feeling more part of their community. People feel less lonely as a result and wellbeing improves.

In explaining this change, it's important to factor in the role of the charity and community intermediaries in achieving these outcomes. They play a vital role in (i) distributing the food (ii) establishing trustworthy sites (iii) recruiting and supporting compassionate staff and volunteers (iv) reducing stigma.

Further, there were examples of organisations receiving food from other distributors, making it more challenging to directly link outcomes to FareShare where this was the case.

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