



# The Burrell Shop Impact Report

**The first six months to July 2021**



Norfolk  
Community  
Foundation



CHARLES BURRELL  
CENTRE



Breckland  
COUNCIL

## Figures and Feedback

**“** *I am proud of the individual impact and the dignity and the freedom that The Burrell Shop has provided for people. The mum that says she can afford to put the heating on at home in the winter now. The family of 7 that can buy 4 times as much food for the same cost. And the relationships that are forming and where people have developed these relationships with Billie who can support them and the village infrastructure that this creates. It's a conduit for signposting to other services and is already having a substantial and tangible impact on so many people's lives.*

- Danny Whitehouse, former CEO of The Charles Burrell Centre

**“** *It is a community thing, just knowing you've got someone there in case something happens. It's not just a shop to us.*

- Emma, Burrell Shop Member

**12,000kg**  
of food waste saved  
from landfill and  
**36,000kg**  
of CO<sub>2</sub>  
saved  
from the  
atmosphere



**155** Members  
signed up to  
The Burrell Shop  
with over **400**  
beneficiaries

across  
households  
enabling a



**40%** saving on  
costs of an average  
weekly shop and

**£780-936**



average annual  
household  
savings thanks  
to over **450**  
hours contributed by  
volunteers

**“** *I wanted members to walk in and find a corner shop that had really great prices and a nice welcome. Somewhere they would feel comfortable to come in with no stigma and no harsh questioning and lots of other things that we could start to offer.*

- Billie, Shop Manager of The Burrell Shop

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pandemic crisis response, 25% of Norfolk Community Foundation's funding was awarded to 'pop-up' food distribution networks.

Furthermore, these challenges are only likely to increase as the furlough scheme comes to an end; economic instability threatens livelihoods; protection from eviction for tenants ends; the re-distribution of food surplus becomes more of a challenge and emergency funding dries up; logistical challenges in distributing surplus food continues; and community organisations that provided emergency food distribution return to business-as-usual.

## Introduction

In Norfolk, a county famous for agriculture and food production, there are thousands of people across communities struggling to access affordable food on a regular basis. The Covid-19 pandemic has brought to the fore the reality of food poverty in Britain: 2.3 million children live in households that have experienced food poverty in the last 6 months (Food Foundation, 2021). Missed meals and poor diet have a significant and detrimental impact on the health and well-being for children and adults. It also has a wider impact on children's education, increased vulnerability and risk of exploitation, economic insecurity and community cohesion. Food is a fundamental basis for individuals and households and every individual should have the opportunity to access affordable food.

Norfolk, with its low wage economy, seasonal working pattern and significant employment within the retail, hospitality and tourism sectors, has been significantly impacted by the pandemic. Communities have been made particularly vulnerable and at risk to the factors resulting in increased levels of food insecurity. In the first 100 days of the

**“Food poverty is contributing to social unrest. Add school closures, redundancies, and furloughs into the equation and we have an issue that could negatively impact generations to come. It all starts with stability around access to food.**

**- Marcus Rashford MBE**

**“People in our community are struggling. If you're receiving just 80% of your usual wage or have lost your job, it can be impossible to manage. The Burrell Shop is helping people stretch their income further to ensure no one goes hungry.**

**- Billie Lawler, Shop Manager**



All of these factors emphasise the importance of local strategies in ensuring accessibility for affordable food and have led to Norfolk Community Foundation developing the Nourishing Norfolk initiative to tackle food poverty in a sustainable and community-centred approach. There are a number of different models for providing affordable food in communities from pantries to citizen's supermarkets to community shops (all with differences in criteria and membership), but all aim to provide a more sustainable and dignified approach than the distribution of emergency food. Emergency food, whether in the form of food banks or parcels delivered to the home have played, and will continue to play, a crucial role in supplying food to those people who find themselves in the desperate situation of having no access to food and insufficient income to support their needs. However, it is widely agreed that this should only be a short term solution to what is a complex issue.

Feeding Britain were and continue to be invaluable in providing advice and contacts within their network, which Norfolk Community Foundation were able to utilize to develop a model that would work for Thetford.

**“ Having to accept food handouts on an ongoing basis is no good for anyone's self-respect or health. That's why we are developing projects that give people control and choice when it comes to feeding their families and themselves.**

**- Claire Cullens, CEO of Norfolk Community Foundation**

From the outset, Norfolk Community Foundation provided a strong leadership role, using connections and managing complex situations in order to establish and support the community supermarket.

The Burrell Shop was launched in November 2020 as a community supermarket on the Burrell estate in Thetford. Funded through Breckland Borough Council, Norfolk Community Foundation and Feeding Britain, the shop aims to address the challenges many face around accessing affordable food on a regular basis.

This report reflects upon the first six months since The Burrell Shop was opened providing an overview of the successes, the challenges and the stories which show the impact this project has had within the community.



# Location and Need

***“The fact is you’ve only got two small corner shops on the estate and they are so expensive so it’s really good that members can come here [to The Burrell Shop].” – Barbara, volunteer***

From Norfolk Community Foundation’s focussed research in Thetford in 2019 (‘Thetford Shines Brighter’) and analysing community groups and charity’s grant demand during the recent months of the pandemic, we know that for many communities in Thetford buying every day food supplies is becoming increasingly difficult and on occasion simply not possible. Ensuring the right location for the community supermarket was critical in ensuring that it provides the greatest impact to the largest number of people who need it most. Identifying areas of greatest need is not always straightforward and can cause disagreement or contention from other areas that would benefit from such resources.

With a large number of food bank participants in recent years coming from the Burrell estate; the recognition of it as an area of deprivation; and the local schools having a particularly high number of pupils receiving free school meals, this provided a strong evidence base

for locating the supermarket at the heart of the Burrell estate.

***“The people who genuinely need to access it have to walk and if they have to hop on to a bus and pay a bus fare, they probably won’t.” – Nik Chapman, CEO of The Charles Burrell Centre***





The Charles Burrell Centre, located on the large site of a former high school, is a well-established community and business hub at the heart of the Burrell estate, which offers several important factors for the success of the shop:

- The Burrell Centre is a **recognised and easily accessible location** within the community
- The Centre acts as a **community connector** linking a broad range of organisations (businesses, social enterprise and voluntary/community sector) under one roof creating opportunities to develop mutually beneficial relationships
- There is a broad range of **knowledge and experience** within the Burrell Centre and a willingness to **support one another**
- **Reduces cost** as the rent and overheads for the shop are covered within the wider Burrell Centre expenses

**“ We are lucky because we have such a big centre with café, shop, space, the back field, there is so much we can offer. We work really well together like that. As a team we can cobble together skills and knowledge and experience.**

**- Billie, Shop Manager**

As well as providing affordable and accessible food for community members, the shop also aims to reduce the impact on the environment through bringing together food provision, access and distribution within a closer geographical area. The map below shows the location of The Burrell Shop on the southern side of Thetford with a rough idea of the area where most members live and a broader geography of local growers and suppliers of food for the shop.



# Aims, Outputs and Outcomes

The tables below provide an overview of the main aims for The Burrell Shop, the expected output and outcomes associated with each one, and how these are likely to be measured and evidenced.

## 1. Food Resilience

<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Access to good quality, affordable food for community members	Reduced shopping bills on food	Data showing number of members and wider beneficiaries (i.e. household members)
Reliable and varied food procurement from diverse sources, such as FareShare, HIS Church, local supermarkets, suppliers and producers	Reduced worry and anxiety about food	Data and feedback showing amount saved on food bills
	Reduced need to access emergency food sources	Feedback on impact of scheme on daily lives and wellbeing of members
	Sustainable supply of food to meet weekly needs of customers	Data and/or feedback on use of local food banks
		Feedback from members regarding shopping patterns and shop's impact
		Data on source of food and impact on cost and affordability

## 2. Healthy lifestyles

<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Provide a range of healthy food options	Increased consumption of nutritious food, including fresh fruit and vegetables	Evidence of healthy food in store and how these are presented
Provide regular and varied recipes for healthy meals	Increased consumption of different types of food	Feedback from members on whether there has been a change in diet and/or cooking habits
Promote healthy food as an attractive option within the shop	Increased confidence in cooking new dishes	Uptake of cooking lessons and/or recipe cards by members
Cooking lessons at the community café	Uptake of recipe cards	Feedback from staff and volunteers around what has/hasn't worked in promotion of healthier foods

## 3. Wider support needs

<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Provide a welcoming and friendly atmosphere in the shop	Members feel confident to talk to shop staff/volunteers about wider issues they are facing	Feedback from members about their experiences within the shop and how they have been supported
Ensure that members have access to wraparound support to address other issues or barriers they may be facing	Shop staff and volunteers feel confident they can signpost individuals to the right place for further support	Feedback from staff/volunteers about the types of support required and how these have been dealt with
Information boards	Members are able to access specialist support and advice	Data and feedback on services signposted to and/or organisations that have held drop-in sessions at shop
Drop-in sessions with specialist agencies, for example Citizen's Advice Bureau		



## 4. Community Engagement

<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Encourage sense of 'pride of place' amongst community members	Members feel positive about their community and see the shop as a social and community hub	Feedback from members around sense of place and the impact the shop has had on community cohesion
Encourage cross-cultural sharing and experiences	Events bring together different members of the community	Participation in events (photos/feedback/numbers)
Hosting community events, such as community meals, coffee mornings, drop-ins, etc	The shop is an inclusive place for all those who need to access it	Data and feedback on volunteering in the community
Sense of ownership and input of the project by wider community	Creating a sustainable shop 'owned' by the community	Feedback on whether community members have begun to instigate or contribute to the shop, i.e. initiating schemes or events, active participation, volunteering, donations/recycling

## 5. Green impact

<u>Outputs</u>	<u>Outcomes</u>	<u>Evidence</u>
Procure food from local producers and retailers	Reduce the food miles associated with products in the shop	Data on where food is sourced and the miles travelled
Develop partnerships/networks with other food projects	Build a network of local providers and suppliers	Evidence and feedback as to who are the local suppliers and providers and how these relationships were built
Encouraging recycling, reusing and upcycling, where possible	Reduce food waste in the local area	Evidence of recycling/upcycling etc (i.e. photos, feedback, data) organisations that have held drop-in sessions at shop

# How it works

## Getting the shop up and running

***“Getting it up and running quickly was good for momentum and effective at bringing the team together - funding was in place which was great as there was no need to wait for a long period before being able to proceed with the project.” – Danny Whitehouse, former CEO of The Charles Burrell Centre***

After the location had been selected and funding established, the next step was to create a shop, which was to be based in the former school library. Despite the challenges of Covid and national lockdowns, this was achieved remarkably quickly over a two month period. One invaluable factor was that the recently appointed shop manager, Billie Lawler, had extensive experience across the retail sector and specifically in the launching of new shops. Checklists and spreadsheets were created and items ordered and acquired to begin fitting the shop in time for its launch in early November 2020. Being part of the Charles Burrell Centre was also extremely helpful in ensuring the shop had all the correct and appropriate measures in place for the food hygiene certificate and Tracy Terry's experience in running the café was invaluable in achieving a 5\* rating. A number of other members of staff helped in the build up to the launch, assembling shelves and units and preparing the shop's layout.

Danny conceded that he would have liked to have acquired more items second-hand, but with the tight timeframe some of the items had to be bought new. In some regards (and despite the well-meaning ethos) this was the right decision as a used chiller began leaking

not long after the shop opened. Faced with a significant cost to replace this item, Feeding Britain stepped in and generously donated two new chillers for the shop - an invaluable resource in ensuring the shop can provide essential chilled items, such as milk and other dairy products. This highlights the importance of being part of larger and wider networks where support and advice can quickly be offered and received.

***“I just thought I've got my empty shell, what am I going to need? I said to Danny at the time, this is what I think we'll need in terms of shelving, fridge, freezer. When do we need that by? We broke it down in to small steps.” – Billie, Shop Manager***



## Food supply

***“For me, the hardest thing was knowing where the food would be coming from - would it arrive well, quickly, with a good variety? Would I be able to offer the kind of experience I wanted our members to have?” – Billie, Shop Manager***

One of the most challenging aspects of launching and running a community supermarket was ensuring a regular and consistent supply of affordable food. The two vital aspects were: supply and cost. There are a range of sources of food supply, each with their particular benefits and drawbacks. Below are the key suppliers for The Burrell Shop and it is clear that for a successful model, it was essential to have a diversified range of suppliers. Therefore, if one supplier was unable to deliver there were alternative options to ensure consistent stock flow and supply to the shop, and most importantly to its members, who were relying on this food as a key part of their weekly budget and food shopping. In terms of cost, different suppliers charge different amounts from free of charge to covering costs to wholesale prices and the challenge is to ensure that these savings were passed on to the customer whilst still ensuring that the shop had a sustainable financial model.

**FareShare** – one of the main re-distributors of food in the UK, taking good quality surplus from across the food industry and distributing it to charities and community groups. FareShare charges 40p per kilogram to cover the cost of logistics and sends a wide range of ambient and fresh goods by pallet. Shops are asked to use a points system for these products, which The Burrell Shop has now switched to, but unfortunately logistical challenges for FareShare have meant that they have yet to receive any further deliveries.

**HIS Church** – are an emergency goods redistribution charity, providing supplies of chilled, frozen and ambient goods by the pallet load for a reduced price. They have supplied The Burrell Shop with a range of products (including an initial large pallet of cleaning products), which has been incredibly helpful but as with FareShare, it is not always possible to predict what goods will be supplied. This can therefore be a challenge in ensuring the shop is stocked with a wide range of products that would enable customers to do all of their weekly shopping.

**Bankuet** – members of the public donate money to their chosen organisation and Bankuet uses these funds to purchase items for the organisation on their shopping list. The Burrell Shop has only recently signed up to Bankuet, but have already received a ‘gifted’ delivery.

**Morrison’s wholesale** – offers bulk purchases of 9000 products at wholesale prices through an online portal. This has been a very useful way of filling some of the gaps as specific products can be ordered.





**Local supermarkets and suppliers** – these are crucial relationships that have been developed locally and which provide an additional source of supply. Donated items from Sainsbury's, Tesco and Warburtons provide a regular supply of varied food stocks to supplement the offer in the shop. Nik Chapman is also in discussion with a local supermarket to receive their food surplus and then additional products that might be required at cost plus a penny. This would help provide a more sustainable, affordable and local supply of food but would also serve to reduce the store's waste costs, meet community and social responsibility goals, and create a strong sense of brand recognition amongst a local customer base.

**Local farms and businesses** – another important series of relationships is with local farmers and growers who provide fruit, vegetables and eggs to the store on a weekly basis. There are a number of examples of local generosity coupled with the ability of the Burrell Shop to say 'yes' to opportunities: a farmer who donated 250 boxes of fruit and veg for Christmas; frozen food from The Theatre Royal in Norwich; a local businessman having heard of the shop through the Thetford Business Forum donated a significant supply of breakfast cereals.

One significant challenge The Burrell Shop had faced in its first six months was ensuring the balance between a good range of products and ensuring that the cost to the member was kept at an affordable level, whilst maintaining the financial sustainability of the shop. In some instances, this required charging less than the cost price of certain items (such as milk or meat) and balancing that cost deficit by increasing the 'price' of other products by a small percentage. This juggling act has helped ensure that a range of food is available to members at an affordable price.

### Sainsbury's Local Connection

**This relationship was developed through the local community liaison police officer, who after visiting the shop, met with the community manager in Sainsbury's. From that meeting, The Burrell Shop is now the Sainsbury's front of shop charity, which means they receive all of the food donations given by Sainsbury's customers.**

**Billie describes the importance of the police officer's role: *"She was our ambassador. It was someone who really got what we were trying to do and asked what can I do to make it happen?"***



# Engaging the community and marketing the shop

***“I think it will grow exponentially once the word gets out there because that’s how people like personal recommendations, don’t they? And if your friend says ‘you must go to this shop’, then you’re likely to go. However many adverts they see, but if my friend goes, then that’s okay.” – Sandra, volunteer***

Word of mouth was a crucial means for engaging with the community and encouraging new membership. A number of members mentioned that they heard about the shop through a friend who recommended it to them. Upon visiting, the warmth of the welcome and the affordable prices, led to them signing up and they were soon recommending it to their own friends and family.

However, that is not to say that the more traditional means of marketing did not happen. Flyers were delivered to every house in the community, an article was written for the ‘About Thetford’ magazine and every individual who received a food parcel in the area also received information about the shop. One member mentioned that she learnt about the shop through a letter sent out by the local primary school.

***“We actually started by leafleting both of the schools, an infants and a junior school on the estate. But I think things like this get around more by word of mouth because I don’t think people really read information.” – Barbara, volunteer***

There were also challenges to overcome regarding the perception of the shop, i.e. that it would be full of cardboard boxes and deteriorating food. Billie tells the story of how a woman who had been receiving food parcels stepped through the door, not long

after the shop had opened, and could not believe that the community supermarket could actually look like a real shop. A further challenge was that people did not believe the shop was for them and there was a wariness about whether they would qualify, even though they might be struggling at the end of each month.

***“It was important to begin at a slow pace. It was smart to be careful in expanding the number of members through word of mouth. A slower build up meant we could do it well and form stronger relationships with the first key contacts.” – Danny, former CEO of Charles Burrell Centre***

Another important aspect in establishing the shop was the role of key community members. Barbara has volunteered at The Burrell Shop since before it was opened and has lived in the community for many years, participating in numerous community projects and school PTAs, so is well known in the area. Billie had been wondering why there hadn’t been any of the parents from the local school coming across to the shop, knowing that there was definitely a need. So she asked Barbara who, knowing the parents, was able to go across and speak to them, explaining how the shop worked and why it would be of benefit to them. These key community connectors have played a vital role in creating the links between the shop and the community as well as creating the friendly and familiar atmosphere inside the shop.

## Membership

***“The premise of it was about helping members save money and make it go further, help them make better nutritional choices, even just being able to have a choice. But we wanted to make it feel as much like another shop, a corner shop with the dignity to go when you like, spend what you like or what you can afford.” – Billie, Shop Manager***

From the outset, it was important for all those involved in the concept of The Burrell Shop that the membership criteria should not be too restrictive, exclusive or intrusive. Whilst some models have criteria based on income or employment status, which requires people to bring in evidence and complete paperwork (which can act as a deterrent for community members), The Burrell Shop has created a simplified model. The criteria for membership is geographical, covering the Burrell estate, but with a flexibility based on common sense and need, so that if someone with genuine need walks into the shop from just outside of the estate, they would not be turned away.

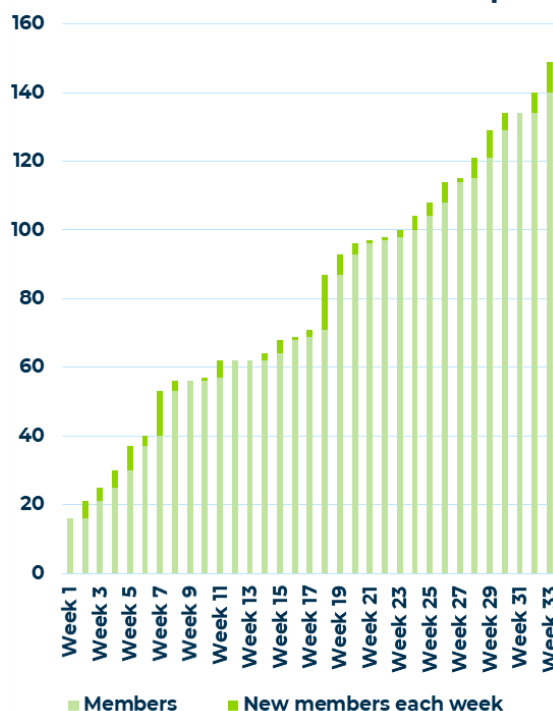
The membership form requires only basic personal information: name, proof of address, phone number and email (the latter two purely for communication to update members of any changes, such as opening hours). In addition, the members are asked who else lives in their household. This allows

volunteers and staff to see at a glance how many people the member is shopping for when they are visiting the shop and prevents having to ask the awkward question if they know that the reason for buying three loaves of bread is because they are from a large household.

It was also felt that it was important that customers were not asked to ‘check-in’ upon arrival as is done in other models. This was to ensure that the shop maintained a sense of providing a normal shopping experience, reducing any stigma or sense of charity that might be attached to the shop.

So far, this model has proven to be a success with membership steadily increasing week on week (as shown in the graph) and with little evidence of the system being abused by those who do not need it, as some people may have feared. Overwhelmingly, The Burrell Shop has supported those people who need this support the most.

**Membership Growth by Week for The Burrell Shop**



**“People don’t want to be flagged up as someone in need of charity, they want to just go about their business, keep their head down and from time to time come and access this but feel like it is nothing special. I’ve always said that I want to make our members feel special in all the best ways, not in the ways that make them feel like a lower person in society.**

**- Billie, Shop Manager**



# The Shop

## Staff and volunteers

*"I'm a volunteer, I come in on Thursday morning and do whatever Billie asks me to do, very often filling shelves, sorting things out, unpacking things, talking to people, smiling at people, trying to be welcoming. I've known Billie for a few years and I think we went for a cup of coffee and she was telling me about this exciting new thing that was happening at work and I said 'I can help you with that.'" – Sandra, volunteer*

The importance of ensuring the right staff and volunteers was essential to the success of The Burrell Shop over the first six months. It was clear from the number of visits and conversations in and around the shop that Billie is at the heart of the shop's success. She lives in the community, knows and understands the members, has built a fantastic rapport with people, and is passionate about creating the right environment and atmosphere for the shop. At the centre of this was the fact that Billie and the volunteers have all experienced similar issues and challenges as the members themselves: *"I know that all our volunteers and myself really have been there so we say that quite a lot- 'please don't feel embarrassed, we've all been there, we get it' because genuinely we do."*

It was evident when talking to Billie and seeing her interact with customers that building up those relationships and rapport were crucial parts of her role. Sometimes it is the small things that make a difference to people's lives, knowing that there is a friendly welcoming face when they come to shop, providing a bit of cheer on a difficult day. Billie shares an anecdote that reflects this: *"One lady mentioned that it was her birthday and I was like 'oh, it's your birthday, you must*

*take something!' so I offered her some things and she was like, 'no really it's fine'. So I offered her from underneath the counter an out of date box of chocolates and she just fell about laughing and she said 'you know what, I won't take them but thank you anyway. You have made my birthday, you've made me laugh and I didn't think I was going to laugh today.' And it wasn't about food, it was just about relationships."*

With just the one shop manager, the recruitment of volunteers was vital in ensuring there was sufficient support for the daily running of the shop. For the most part, Billie already knew a number of the people who became volunteers, as they lived in the community; others came through recommendations. It was important that the volunteer would act as an ambassador for the shop, were approachable and non-judgemental and ensured that the members would feel welcome.



## Opening hours

The current opening times of the shop are Monday to Saturday, 10am-12pm, and Monday, 4-6pm. Initially, the opening hours were Monday to Friday from 10am-12pm, but it was soon realised that this did not suit everyone's time to shop, particularly if they were working. A Saturday morning and Monday afternoon slot were soon trialled and proved to be a success in providing a greater flexibility for people to access the shop.

The relatively short opening times was also necessary to ensure there was not too much pressure placed on staff and volunteer time, whilst still providing enough opportunity for members to come and shop throughout the week.

## Layout

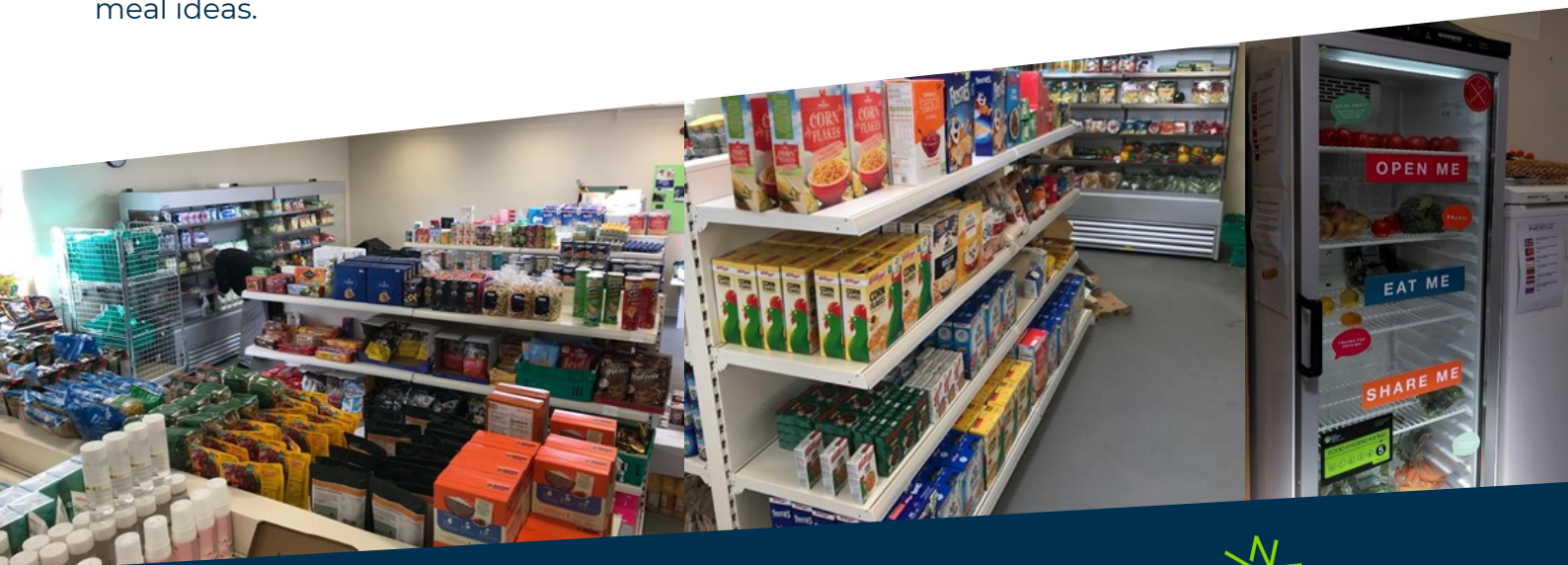
The aim was to create a community supermarket which felt like a small food shop with aisles, chillers, a freezer, fruit and veg racks, and a till. This has certainly been achieved and the first impression when walking through the entrance is that you've entered a small shop. But it also retains a sense of the community ethos too with an information leaflet rack; donated items on shelves to be taken for free; a revolving recipe rack for new meal ideas.

## Volunteer profile: Barbara

**“** *I've just retired so I have a little more free time during the day so I can come and help. I volunteer two mornings a week but I've been involved since the beginning helping to set it up.*

*It was amazing seeing all of the food coming in and you think this is going to be like a real shop. I love the fact that it's also got room to grow so we are looking at maybe opening an area where we can have coffee with people because you often get someone coming in who suddenly opens up to you because you're probably their first contact of the day after dropping the kids off. More and more it's becoming like a place where the members know they've got a friendly face they can chat to as well as do a shop at an affordable price.*

*One of my skills is people skills. I'm quite approachable and lots of people on the estate know me because I've lived here for so long and been involved in so much so it's quite nice for them to see a friendly face.*



One important early step was to move the community fridge from the café, where it was not monitored and at times exploited, into the shop. It has now become a feature of a customer's regular shop where they can pick out fresh food from the fridge for free to supplement their other items.

Acknowledging that the shop layout could still be improved, Nik and Billie are considering moving the shop into the adjacent room in order to create a space at the front of the shop where members can sit and talk with volunteers and staff about the issues they might be experiencing. In the future this space could also be utilised by wider support services (Citizen's Advice Bureau, for example) to host drop-in sessions.

## Products and pricing system

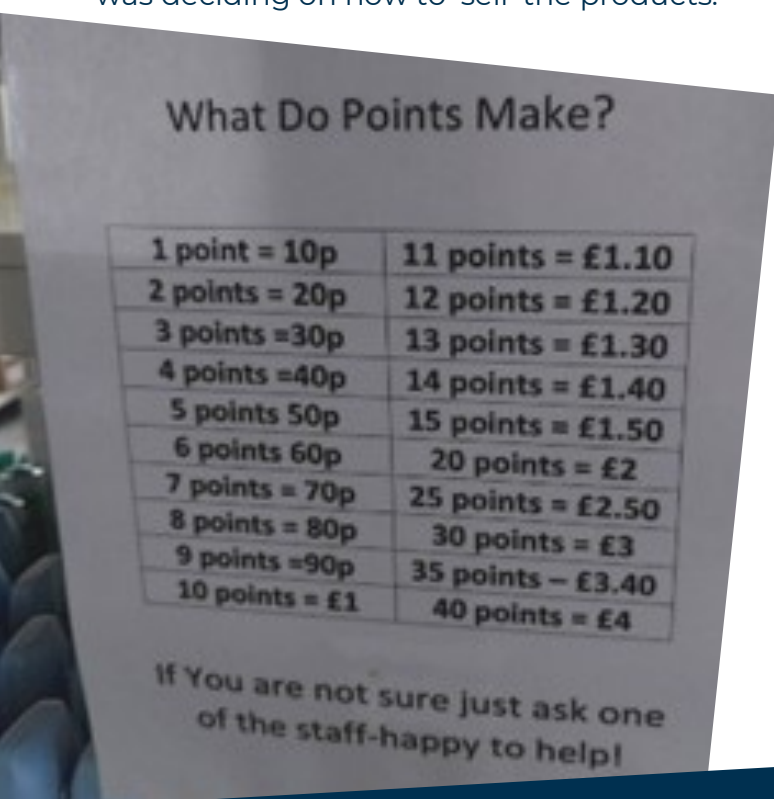
***"I'm absolutely amazed at the sheer quality and quantity that you have on the shelves and in the fridges and the diversity of the things I can buy here."*** – New member

One of the key early challenges for the shop was deciding on how to 'sell' the products.

Initially, this was done through a normal pricing system, but in order to ensure the continuation of FareShare stock, a point's system has since been implemented. There was a concern that this would add a layer of confusion for members and detract from the vision of creating a normal shopping experience for customers, but it was felt, on balance, that this was important to ensure a potentially crucial element of food supply. Effectively, 10p = 1 point, 20p = 2 points, and so on. At all stages, it is important to note that The Burrell Shop has been open and transparent about its model (pricing or points system) and the fact that any money generated is utilised within the shop to ensure a broad range of affordable products. It is a not-for-profit venture.

***"If you go to a foodbank - and I know you're in a desperate situation- you don't get any choice over what you have. Whereas here the member can choose what they get for what they can afford. And at the same time it is giving them dignity, the dignity of actually shopping in what is a normal shop. I think that is one of the main benefits."*** – Barbara, volunteer

In addition to the system used, it was important that the shop was well-stocked with a range of products from fresh to chilled, frozen to tinned, personal hygiene to household; effectively allowing customers to do their full weekly shop at The Burrell Shop without the need to go elsewhere. As Nik states, though, these products should not just be the cheapest, bottom line brand, but should offer a more nutritious option. It again returns to that sense of offering a real shopping experience, of providing dignity and choice for members. Where possible, the shop has also tried to respond to customer's requests for certain products, providing they can be found at affordable prices.



1 point = 10p	11 points = £1.10
2 points = 20p	12 points = £1.20
3 points = 30p	13 points = £1.30
4 points = 40p	14 points = £1.40
5 points = 50p	15 points = £1.50
6 points = 60p	20 points = £2
7 points = 70p	25 points = £2.50
8 points = 80p	30 points = £3
9 points = 90p	35 points = £3.40
10 points = £1	40 points = £4

If You are not sure just ask one of the staff-happy to help!



# Impact

## Food resilience

The primary aim of The Burrell Shop is to provide affordable food for people within the community who are struggling financially. This may be because they are unemployed, on universal credit (or awaiting it), are not entitled to public funds (i.e. asylum seekers), or have a waged income which is insufficient to meet the household costs, including being furloughed. The last year has exacerbated a pre-existing situation, increasing the number of households who are vulnerable and at risk of food insecurity. Food

### Crisis Point

A man came into The Burrell Shop one morning and had no money until the end of the month to afford food. Billie was able to provide him with a crisis pack containing enough food to last a few days.

The man had temporarily given up work to care for a relative with the understanding that his job would be waiting for him. Unfortunately, when Covid hit there was no longer a job. Several times in recent weeks he had felt dizzy and unwell and believed it was because he hadn't been able to afford to eat properly.

**He said:** *"I never thought I would be reduced to this... I've always worked all my life and here I am, I need the food bank, the community fridge and I need you guys. I'm just so humbled and so grateful that actually you're all here. But coming through the door the first time is really hard."*

banks may provide an emergency solution but they also require a referral from another organisation and are often limited to the number of visits. Billie explains the important role community supermarkets can play:

***"Whilst sadly for a huge period to come there is going to be a need for food banks to continue in the way that they have, but if you've had your three times at the food bank, what are you going to do? If you've gone from working full time to no job and universal credit that's a huge income loss potentially and it is going to take you a while to get used to that and your outgoings you've got to shrink right down. Going straight back to Sainsbury after three food bank visits, it's not going to happen. People who are on long term sickness benefit- they are never going to have access to the kind of income that would make it comfortable for them to think 'yeah, a weekly shop at Tesco' or even Aldi or Lidl. They can't keep accessing food banks for lots of different reasons- there needs to be that in-between that is not profiteering but which can offer something with that choice and dignity."***

The prices of products at The Burrell Shop ensure that members are saving around 40% on their average weekly shop, which could translate to around £15-18 per week. This is a significant amount of money to save when operating on such tight margins and budgets. These savings would enable people to pay other bills, to ensure they have heating during winter, to stay ahead of their rent payments (a particular challenge if renting privately), to pay off debt, or simply to take the family on a day out or to have a meal in a restaurant.

There are currently 155 members of The Burrell Shop with 400 people living within the member's household and benefiting from the savings made through the shop. As a multiplier effect this is significant, not only in terms of actual numbers but also in the impact this has on further social, cultural and economic circumstances, such as concentration and attainment in education or at work; mental and physical wellbeing (and the potential savings to health care costs); vulnerability and risk (including to exploitation and crime): all vital concerns for individuals and communities within society. As well as families, the shop supports an older demographic: often individuals living on their own with increased outgoings and risk of social isolation; both of which can be supported through membership at the store.

Some members will only use the shop towards the end of the month as budgets tighten, whilst others will come in weekly or two or three times per week to do their shopping. The lack of restrictions in the way the shop operates allows customers to follow whatever shopping pattern works best for them.

In addition to the affordable prices, there are several other schemes that aim to relieve some of the financial pressure experienced by households:

- The Burrell Shop has recently been able to accept **Healthy Start vouchers**, a government scheme to provide a voucher worth £4.25 per week for fresh produce for pregnant woman and those families with children under the age of four (two vouchers for those with

## A member's view



*I worked all my life but then two years ago I began to suffer with complex health issues and the doctor signed me off work indefinitely, which was obviously a bit of a shock. I've struggled with universal credit and how the system works has not been good for me. So now we rely on the system and my partner also does a bit of part time work but it doesn't bring a lot in.*

*Through the community we heard about the shop and it has made a difference to us and our children. When I get to the end of the month we receive our money, so then so we will go to supermarkets for our shopping. But then later in the month, when it comes to a point where you are struggling then you've got The Burrell Shop. It saves you 30 or 40p on an item and that does make a difference.*

*Also, with my illnesses there's been a couple of times I've been in the shop and I've gone to stand up and with my knees I've been struggling and the shop assistants have helped me, taken the basket off me, gone around and helped me picking the stuff.*

**- Ben, Burrell Shop member**

- children under the age of one)
- The shop is a member of **The Hygiene Bank** through which they will be able to provide those shop members in greatest need with personal hygiene items for free (as well as acting as a distribution hub for local community groups and organisations to distribute items)
- **Fuel Bank Foundation** which provides credit for gas and/or electricity for households that are struggling financially

## Healthy lifestyles

***“When you have a little know-how about how to cook and what goes together, it is actually a lot easier to spend less than buying convenience food.” – Billie, Shop Manager***

Alongside the focus on providing affordable food, the shop has an aim to supply healthy and nutritious products so that members can access all of the food types for a balanced diet. As part of this, there was an aim within the shop to promote healthy eating through a range of strategies:

- Encouraging customers to try new products through **free taste testing** and/or encouraging members to give something a try by providing it for free (often on the promise that they will post a picture of the meal on the members-only Facebook page) or giving tips and advice about how to add ingredients to recipes
- **Recipe cards** that are accessible, through the use of photographic instructions, aiding those who struggle with literacy or with English as a second language
- **Freezer meals**, for example after a recent event for the shop, there was a large amount of vegetarian lasagne left over so Tracy packaged this up into individual ready meals for the shop freezer, which members were able to take away for free or a small cost
- Tracy has shared recipes and photos on the **Facebook page**

When Covid restrictions have lifted, the community café at The Charles Burrell Centre will be able to offer cooking lessons and demos, charging for groups who can afford to pay in order to subsidise those who cannot. Similarly, Barbara who volunteers at the shop, has a cooking club for 10-16 year olds:

***“We always try to look for healthy options. We try and cook things they would find in the cupboard at home and... [so] one of the things we’re going to do after the summer is the young people are going to plan what they will cook and then I’ll take them down to the shop and we will buy all the ingredients and price it up as they go along. Then take it back up and cook.”***



### The Fruit & Veg Challenge

**One of the challenges faced in the store was encouraging customers to take the fruit and vegetables. For instance, there was a sack of unwashed potatoes near the entrance to the shop for customers to take free of charge. However, there was very little uptake initially. Billie decided to bag the potatoes up into individual bags for households and that seemed to work.**

**Billie has also begun a special veg of the week feature within the store, highlighting a particular vegetable and including recipes on how to prepare a meal with it. For example, showcasing a recipe prepared by Marcus Rashford and Tom Kerridge, which the shop will promote with a pictorial guide and ideas on how to use leftovers.**



## Community engagement

***“It is great that the shop is integrated with everything else that is going on and this is such a part of the community now and it’s just amazing!” – Barbara, volunteer***

After only six months of being open, and despite the disruption and challenges of the Covid pandemic, the shop has begun to take on the form of a community hub. It is a place where people drop in for a chat with Billie or the volunteers whilst doing their shopping; where they can come for support and advice; where they can play a game of bingo in the café and have a chat with others over a cup of tea; where those previously marginalised come to feel that they have a place in the community. This part of the shop’s vision is in its early days and once the café is up and running and lockdown restrictions have disappeared, the potential here is significant: community meals; advice hubs; drop-in sessions; workshops; cross-cultural cooking lessons; community activities and events.

Supported by its location in the Charles Burrell Centre (and the links to other organisations and community groups here),

the shop (and café) has one particular thing that everyone has in common: food. We all need it, we enjoy talking about it, many enjoy preparing and sharing it, and through the practicalities of the shop and the warmth of the staff and volunteers, a shared community is growing. The membership has helped create this sense of collective identity supported through the closed, members-only Facebook group where people can share photos, recipes and tips about food, and through the relationships built in the shop. There appears to be a real sense of ‘we are in this together’ and the dignity that the shop’s model affords reduces or removes the sense of stigma that might otherwise exist. Perhaps this also builds on some of the community spirit generated by the almost ‘war-time’ context that the pandemic has created: people increasingly willing to support others within their community, particularly those more isolated and vulnerable. There have been regular examples of shop members buying larger amounts of food than they require because they were delivering to several households on one street, who might have been socially isolating or elderly and vulnerable.

Ben, a member of the shop, captures it well when he said that ***“at the end of the day, we are all a community, we’re here to support one another. So as much as I’m using the shop, I’m going to give back as well.”*** That sense of giving back is evident and significant in understanding the sense of community that has been developed at the shop over the first six months. There have been numerous examples of people donating items to the shop that can then be taken and used by other members (as seen in the photo to the left).



At Christmas, there were donations of advent calendars and chocolate treats which were gifted to parents who could not have afforded them otherwise, but which make a small but real difference to the family. One member decided to launch a fundraising appeal to raise money for toys that parents could then take home to give to their children at Christmas.

The Burrell estate is also home to a diverse mix of cultures, including people from Portugal, Eastern Europe and South Asia. In fact, Billie estimates that around 20% of the shop members are Eastern European. Most speak good English and for those where the language barrier is more of a challenge, Billie says they have still managed to communicate with one another through the universal understanding of hand gestures and so there has been no significant issue in accessing the shop. In the information rack, Billie has ensured that there are copies of the Citizen's Advice Bureau's leaflet in different languages. Links to the Polish Language School in the centre have already been established with a strong focus on food (sharing posts and photos of the Polish dumplings, Pierogi, on international heritage day, for example). The importance of inclusion has been at the heart of the shop's ethos and the example on the right really highlights the impact this can have.

## Social Inclusion

**There is one family that has experienced discrimination and exclusion from some members of the community due to their ethnic identity. The mother was coming to the food bank and community fridge in The Burrell Centre every week and she became aware that the shop was being opened. She was one of the very first customers. She struggles with literacy and dealing with institutions so Billie has helped make calls with her. She has seen Billie being calm when asking questions, receiving good answers and so she now has the confidence that those people at the end of the phone are there to help. Her kids come in and say hello and two of them had handfuls of competition entries for Billie to put up.**

**As Billie states: *"in the shop people have started speaking to her and asking about her children. At first, she has been defensive as she's waiting for the first ugly comment and the ugly comment hasn't come. So there has been some really nice interactions and for her to feel accepted as part of the community or more and more accepted, must feel quite nice. And because people see me just chatting and laughing with her like I would everybody else. For them to realise that she's just trying to do the best by her kids."***



## Kickstart

The Burrell Shop has been able to take on two Kickstart placements facilitated through Feeding Britain. This was a great opportunity to provide a paid work experience placement for young people from the local area. During the placement they will gain experience in retail, customer service, till work, café and general maintenance as part of the wider opportunities within the Charles Burrell Centre.



Often it's not the large interventions that matter the most, but the series of small gestures and ideas that create a sense of place and pride and community. For example, Billie decided she needed a thank you card to send out to those who had kindly donated items to the store or supported in some way. She could have easily designed one herself, but instead she

created a competition for the children of members to design a card: ***"I had two little girls come in the other day and their hands were full of colouring things and they waited until I put every single thing up. They are telling me which of their siblings had done which. If a handful of those children grow up knowing they can make a difference, then that's all for the good."***





## Wider support needs

***“Understanding your local area [is important] and the Charles Burrell Centre has its network like Citizen’s Advice and other projects like Keystone and what they are doing for rough sleepers. We don’t have to know much more about it other than we know how to get you some help. I think that’s really important for any shop setting up. If you don’t already know then go and try and find out and make those connections.” – Billie, Shop Manager***

A key consideration that was part of the early understanding and the vision for The Burrell Shop was that, as Nik states: “if you have a food problem you’ve probably got half a dozen other problems as well.” By helping to address the fundamental concern of ensuring food security, what other wider support could be offered to the members? Broadly speaking, there were two forms of intervention that have been provided to assist shop members. For the first, the emphasis was on the volunteers, and in particular, Billie. Her welcoming, friendly and open approach has led to many customers coming to Billie for support with ‘everyday’ problems, such as understanding bills, issues with mobile phone credit limits, ovens that have stopped working, and so on. It takes time to build this trust and relationship with

people but already there is plenty of evidence that this has been the case in the shop, as Billie describes: ***“For some people, they will talk eventually. They will go ‘don’t suppose you know how to or how I can, what do you know about?’ or I get the letter slipped towards me- ‘is this bad news?’ And they know I’ll read it under the counter and if we need to then we can go and access a private area. One young woman now accesses her internet banking but she then hands over her phone and I check whether a bill has been paid and hand it back. But she trusts me to do that and that’s huge.”***

These are genuine issues and concerns that can cause a great deal of stress for people, but which are often fairly quickly resolved with a phone call, an online check, a reassuring word or an empathetic ear; all of which Billie and the volunteers have been happy and able to do.

***“We had a tenant this week come to us and said they knew a young woman who was in a pickle, she doesn’t live on the ward but she’s pretty close and I said bring her in. So I had a really nice chat with her and something that was really huge for her, actually with a bit of help and support is going to be fine. But it was making sure she didn’t feel embarrassed and she can keep asking, ‘am I doing this right, am I heading in the right direction?’ and what a lovely young woman, she just needs a bit of a helping hand and I needed that at that age as well!” – Billie, Shop Manager***

The second form of intervention has been through utilising specialist agencies and support. A number of members will also be experiencing more complex or serious issues and barriers that require specialist and



trained support, whether that be in regards to debt and financial issues, tenancy, health and well-being, or benefit's advice. As Billie states: ***"We can't be specialists in everything so we do now refer on to Citizen's Advice for proper debt help. We tell people we can listen to the pickle they've got themselves into, occasionally I have sat and made a phone call with someone and acted as an advocate, but further than that I can't get the interest stopped on it but we do know people who can help with that. I can go and find out who the link is and I can genuinely say to people, there's not much more I can do about that but I can pass you to this person, I know them, they're lovely, they will listen and they will be really helpful."***

This has been an incredibly important part of Billie's role. She has built the relationship with the member; they trust her so that when she refers them on to a specialist that she already knows, they can trust that this person will support them too. It is this role as a 'connector', the link between individuals and agencies that is crucial and often missing. People are often wary of contacting agencies, either due to a lack of confidence or from bad previous experiences. So if someone they trust says this is a person you can speak to with confidence then that will make a significant difference for that individual to receive the support and advice they need. Furthermore, the relationships with agencies and organisations can work both ways so that if someone comes in for support who also needs access to affordable food, that person can be directed to The Burrell Shop.

## Future plans for support

***"The members themselves will probably start to flag up what are the key issues they are experiencing and we can then try and find the appropriate service or person. For us, it is about being flexible, open to change, open to opportunities and listening to our members and what they would like."***

***Once Covid is over, we will look to offer workshops about debt management, effective budgeting skills, and literacy skills. The kind of things that even from the beginning we knew would need to be addressed in an appropriate way at an appropriate time. It feels like we are slotting things in so it becomes part of our wider offering without it feeling odd or awkward."***

***It will be a case of working alongside people like Citizen's Advice Bureau or Step Change for debt management. For literacy, I've already had conversations with West Suffolk College around developing sessions that would be appropriate for our members. And several members have already said what a difference that would make to their lives."***

***I think the members would trust that I have sourced a nice person to come in. I'd either be in the room or introduce them and then discreetly leave. Sometimes it's nice to realise that it's not just the guys in The Burrell Shop who can be pleasant. So for members to see other avenues of help that are just as pleasant and just as welcoming and inclusive is really important."***

**- Billie, Shop Manager**

## Green Impact

***“The thought of all that food going to landfill is just criminal. And I heard the other day that food waste creates more harmful gas than meat production.”***

**– Sandra, volunteer.**

An interesting and important element for The Burrell Shop was considering the impact it might have in terms of food waste, food mileage and more sustainable practices. The simple equation at the heart of the vision of organisations such as FareShare and Feeding Britain is the recognition that on one side there are people who do not have access to sufficient food, whilst on the other side there is surplus food going to waste. This might be

due to over-ordering, unusable packaging, food approaching the end of its shelf life but still edible, or the wrong-shaped fruit and vegetables. This results in 100,000 tonnes of readily available and edible food from the UK's retail and food manufacturing sector going to waste each year (Source: [UK government report, 2020](#)). The redistribution of this food to places such as pantries and community supermarkets not only provides an affordable source of food for struggling households, but also saves retailers money and has a positive impact for the environment- reducing the amount of waste going to landfill and ensuring that the energy used to grow, harvest, package and transport this food is not wasted.

### The Street That Saved

***“I've nominated us for the Hubbub and Food Savvy ‘The Street That Saved’ competition and so we are the street for Norfolk. It will involve 9 households plus the shop participating in a month-long journey. In the first week it is about being normal but before throwing something away, pop it on the scales (each household receives a pack that includes scales) and find out how much it weighs. And then for the next 3 weeks you try and use all of these strategies and you still weigh what you're throwing away and by week 4 you will have reduced the amount you throw away.***

***It creates conversations and then we can have a day here at the shop about how to save the environment. It is about getting people excited because they save money and help the environment.***

**- Billie, Shop Manager**

Furthermore, as Nik mentioned, when people have the dignity of choice over the types of food to buy and eat, they are less likely to waste it. Since opening, Billie has mentioned that the shop has received so many tins of chick peas because they had been sent out in emergency food packages but many people did not know what to do with them. The Burrell Shop has saved over 12,000kg of food waste equating to 36,000kg of CO2 since it opened- a significant contribution from what is a small community shop.

In addition, the donation of used items already mentioned above is a further example of reducing waste whilst providing others with items they might need. The shop has also been involved in other initiatives whether it is through encouraging recycling or signing up for The Street That Saved competition. The drive to start conversations about the shop's green impact amongst its members is an important step in ensuring all stakeholders have an opportunity to understand and be involved in this process for change.



# Future Plans

With the lifting of lockdown restrictions, the opening up of the community café and potential change in shop layout, there will be more opportunities to expand the activities of the shop. Many of these opportunities have already been touched upon in this report, from increased links to support agencies and other community organisations to workshops and drop-in sessions, cooking lessons and community meals, environmental initiatives and cross-cultural connections. The scope is clearly large and varied, but the focus will continue to remain on creating opportunities for the community to access affordable food in a dignified and sustainable manner.

Billie has mentioned the possibility of working in partnership with a credit union for members to put money aside as savings. The flexibility of credit unions tend to allow for small deposits on a regular basis (such as a few pounds of change from the weekly shop), which over the course of a year can add up to enough to cover the costs for special events such as Christmas, birthdays, trips out for the family, etc. The discussions are in the early stages, but it will be important that there are no barriers for members to access, such as the need to set up an online account.

The shop is also keen to explore other products that are not currently available, for example powdered baby milk, which can be a very expensive but essential item for members.

One significant concern is the news that the food bank in the Burrell area will be imminently moving location to the other side of Thetford, 3.5 miles away. Many of the food bank's participants come from the Burrell estate, most of whom would be unable to afford the cost of public transport and a seven mile round trip by foot is not particularly

feasible. One man who is currently reliant on the food bank told Billie that he can't imagine having to walk all the way there and all the way back again. Billie mentioned that with ***"how stick thin he is and the health conditions he was telling me about, there's no way he's going to make it there and back on foot, and he can't afford taxis."***

The Burrell Shop is considering what role it can continue to play in the support of emergency food provision for those who need it the most and have no current economic means by which to access the shop's reduced prices. They have been in conversation with the food bank about acting as a potential satellite bank for the estate or continue to issue crisis packages on their own. However, that may not be sustainable within the current model (as there needs to be some drawback of costs expended on food stock) and may also create a confused two tier model in the same location with some people coming to access free food whilst others are paying as members.

Without a local food bank in the area and with the factors discussed in the introduction likely to exacerbate the food vulnerability for a number of households, solutions need to be found so that more people do not find themselves in a situation where they are unable to access a regular source of food.


The Burrell Shop has, in its first six months, become a lifeline for many within the local community. Whilst saving significant amounts of money on the weekly shopping bill might have been the initial reason for signing up, many members now appreciate the friendliness, support and opportunity to connect with others that The Burrell Shop, as a community hub, can offer.

# Nourishing Norfolk

For the past year the Nourishing Norfolk initiative, launched by Norfolk Community Foundation, has been working with local partners and national experts to devise longer term food solutions for our county. The success of The Burrell Shop highlights the positive impact this approach can have on local communities and the importance of expanding this project to other parts of Norfolk with the next focus being the launch of community shops in Great Yarmouth and Gorleston-on-sea.

The support of Feeding Britain, with its national network of organisations and ability to lobby central government, is crucial to addressing these current and future challenges across the UK. In Norfolk, as further community food initiatives and projects are launched, Norfolk Community Foundation is keen to ensure a local network of like-minded organisations, which can come together to discuss the challenges and successes they face in tackling food insecurity. Replicating the success of the national network led by Feeding Britain, this would hopefully ensure an invaluable source of support and advice alongside opportunities for new organisations to learn more about how they could deliver sustainable food projects in their own areas.

The Covid pandemic has exacerbated the underlying issues of food insecurity and, as described in the introduction to this report, these challenges are only likely to continue and increase in the months ahead. The low wage economy of Norfolk also increases the vulnerability for a number of low income households across the county. Whilst food banks provide a vital service in supplying emergency food, there is a need - as Andrew Forsey of Feeding Britain states - for a tier of affordable food provision which fills the gap

 ***The vaccination programme and the accompanying reopening of society represent a new phase in the pandemic. But the social and economic consequences of Covid-19 for people on low incomes look set to remain with us for a long time. Moreover, with lingering uncertainty around government support schemes and the price of food, there is every chance that those consequences will worsen in the months ahead. If we are to prevent food banks being overwhelmed by a tidal wave of chronic poverty, we will need a robust tier of affordable food provision through community supermarkets that can provide financial relief while building longer-term resilience in household budgets.***

**- Andrew Forsey, National Director,  
Feeding Britain**

between food banks and retail supermarkets. The community supermarket fulfils this need and helps create a more secure, resilient and sustainable approach to food for many households.

Change won't happen overnight; this is a long term project. But if we do not take action immediately, the impact of food poverty in Norfolk could be felt by those who live and work here for generations to come. Inspired by the success of The Burrell Shop, the Norfolk Community Foundation is working with charity partners and local authorities across Norfolk to build practical solutions that eliminate food insecurities in local communities. By providing affordable food, developing partnerships and engaging with communities, the Nourishing Norfolk initiative will continue to work towards building stronger communities, together.

# Acknowledgements

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Norfolk Community Foundation would particularly like to thank the generosity of time given by the staff, volunteers and

members of The Burrell Shop and The Charles Burrell Centre. Their invaluable thoughtful and honest insight into how the model of this community supermarket works has provided the stories that are not only at the centre of this report but are also at the very heart of the shop itself. Danny Whitehouse, Nik Chapman, Tracy Terry, Billie Lawler and all of the volunteers at The Burrell Shop have been crucial to the success of the shop from project inception, during the launch, throughout the first six months and, without doubt, onwards into the future. A big thank you for your work, passion and dedication.







Together, Norfolk shines brighter



Norfolk Community Foundation is a registered charity dedicated to building stronger communities, and improving the lives of people in Norfolk. We build local funding and support that ensures that Norfolk charities and voluntary groups can continue and grow, providing essential care, support and opportunity for the most vulnerable in our communities.

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