



Norfolk
Community
Foundation

Nourishing Norfolk
Food now and a brighter future

UEA
University of East Anglia



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Executive Summary

Bigger than the sum of its parts

It has been two years since our Nourishing Norfolk programme began to establish food hubs across Norfolk to provide a network of support across the county. Our mission is ensure that those struggling the most can always access good quality food, with no one in Norfolk going hungry.

Working with the University of East Anglia, we wanted to understand how the Nourishing Norfolk network is supporting people beyond food. We were inspired to find that it is delivering so much more as well as tackling the central issues contributing to food insecurity.

The success of the hubs has been found to be a result of a number of key factors:

- **Financial impact:** Helping your money to go further.
- **Physical accessibility:** Whether you're in the city or a rural village, there's something in reach.
- **Choice:** You decide what you need, not somebody else.
- **Building community relationships:** Creating a place to meet others and connect.
- **Wider support needs:** Getting help with things that might be holding you back.

Ensuring people do not go hungry is essential, but the food hubs have demonstrated their ability to go further to address the key issues that pull vulnerable people into food insecurity, helping to build a stronger, healthier Norfolk.

In numbers...

12,000
people accessing food
through the hubs

10 hubs open with
more opening in
2022 and planned for 2023

£75 cost per
person to
provide this support

“ Even before the pandemic, poor diet was responsible for one in seven deaths in the UK. This is a medical emergency we can no longer afford to ignore.

- Henry Dimbleby, National Food Strategy, Pt 1



Foreword

In January 2022, I approached the Norfolk Community Foundation with regards to completing a work placement for my International Social Development MA at the University of East Anglia. As I have been at student in Norfolk for the past four years, I was aware of the great work which the Foundation conducts across the county and was hopeful for an opportunity to work with them and learn from their expertise. As part of my work placement, I spent eight weeks working within the Foundation during the summer of 2022. As my particular interests within development lie within the field of food insecurity, Nourishing Norfolk was a perfect fit. During my placement, my primary role was to produce an impact report on the food hubs operating within the Nourishing Norfolk Network. I worked closely with the Foundation to decide on the best way to approach gathering data for the report, and how to effectively represent people's narratives.

Whilst collecting information for the report, I was fortunate enough to visit a number of food hubs in Norfolk. I began by visiting the Burrell Shop, the pilot store in Nourishing Norfolk. The team at the Burrell Shop were a prime example of the amazing work the food hubs are doing and gave me a great introduction into how the hubs work and the impact they have. From there, I went on to visit other food hubs, such as the Soul Foundation in Norwich, the rural Feltwell Pantry, and the Breckland Mobile Food Store.

I was able to talk to different members at the food hubs who told me about why they use them and the impact they have had on their lives. I was also able to talk to staff and volunteers, who work tirelessly to ensure that the hubs are able to provide a stable form of food provision for their members. Both the hubs members and staff all discussed the impact that the current cost of living crisis in Great Britain is having, and the resultant effect on food affordability. These narratives from both food hub members and staff are documented within this report and shows the prominence of and the need for the Nourishing Norfolk Network.

I thoroughly enjoyed completing my MA placement at the Norfolk Community Foundation. I am very thankful for the invaluable experience and the unique opportunity it provided me to see Nourishing Norfolk in action. I hope this report provides a valuable insight into the work of the food hubs within Nourishing Norfolk, and the vital impact that they are having on people's lives across the county.

Sophie Fuller
International Development Masters
Student, University of East Anglia





Introduction

Food now and a brighter future

“ **Food insecurity (sometimes referred to as food poverty) is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.**

- The Food Foundation

Despite Norfolk being a county famed for its agriculture, people are living in a state of food insecurity. Since the first 6 months of the COVID-19 pandemic, food insecurity in the UK has increased by 60% ([The Food Foundation, 2022](#)). The rise in the levels of food insecurity in the UK is linked to the rapidly rising cost of living. Food costs are increasing, and demands are also being placed on people's incomes because of the rising costs of fuel and gas, the increase in national insurance, and the removal of the £20 pandemic uplift for universal credit recipients. These financial demands on households have led to people reducing the amount they spend on food in order to afford other living essentials. This has particularly impacted people with low incomes, as they spend a higher proportion of their income on energy and food.

The national cost of living crisis is greatly impacting Norfolk, which has

a lower wage economy than the UK average. Norfolk's predominantly rural population has been hit particularly hard, because of the rising in costs of domestic heating, car fuel, and the lack of affordable food in rural areas. These factors mean that people in Norfolk are struggling to access affordable food.

Food is fundamental for individuals. Not having enough food can negatively impact someone's physical health, as people often skip meals and purchase cheaper, less nutritious food. It is also harmful to a person's mental health, because of the worry and stress of living with inadequate access to food. The current state of food insecurity and its health implications reveals the importance in providing people with a way to fulfil their right to have access to affordable and nutritious food.



Family Action

It is important to investigate the impact that the food hubs within the Nourishing Norfolk Network are having, particularly given the current cost of living crisis. To investigate the impact of the food hubs, we visited the food hubs in the network and talked to their members and volunteers. The names of the food hubs members and volunteers that we talked to have been given a pseudonym to ensure anonymity within the report. This report summarises the findings from these interviews, focusing on the financial impact of the food hubs, their physical accessibility, the choice of food they provide, the impact on community relationships, and how they meet wider support needs.

“ **Food security is not only about being able to afford enough food but also being able to afford food that is nutritious.**

- Joseph Rowntree Foundation



The Burrell Shop

Nourishing Norfolk

Ensuring no one in Norfolk goes hungry

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 network provides mutual support, advice, and information to help combat food insecurity and make sure no-one in Norfolk goes hungry.

The Norfolk Community Foundation is helping to tackle food insecurity through helping local charities expand their offer to include food hubs. Food hubs are community spaces where people can shop for food locally on a budget. Hubs provide healthy, nutritious food at low prices or for free, offering the benefit of dignity and choice for people living under increasing financial pressure to meet basic needs.

In November 2020, the first food hub, The Burrell Shop, opened at the Charles Burrell Centre in Thetford, following a partnership approach with Breckland Council, national organisation Feeding Britain and Thetford Shines Brighter Funders developed and led by Norfolk Community Foundation. Since launching, the Burrell Shop has been joined by other hubs including The Food Pantry Feltwell, a smaller shop run by volunteers serving a highly rural community, and the Breckland Mobile Food Store, supplying good quality affordable food to rural villages throughout Breckland. Along with the food hubs that have already launched, there are other food hubs in development. The Norfolk Community Foundation aims to establish 15 hubs by the end of 2022, supporting 5,000 households across Norfolk.

Food hubs will build people up, providing necessary food while connecting them to other helpful services. The food hubs are established by communities, and the Norfolk Community Foundation help guide them to develop their offer. Once established, the Norfolk Community Foundation connect hubs to other charities and groups, bringing them onboard and establishing links to provide strong wraparound support to address other issues hub members may be facing.

By providing affordable food, developing partnerships, and engaging with communities, the Nourishing Norfolk initiative will continue to work towards building stronger communities, together.

“ 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, Chief Executive of Norfolk Community Foundation



Feltwell Pantry



2 in 10 people living in poverty don't know where their next meal is coming from

25% of NCF's Covid funding was used to support pop-up food hubs

10 permanent food hubs open

7 permanent food hubs in development

45% off a weekly shop



Financial impact

Making my money go further

People primarily use food hubs because they are struggling financially and need access to food at a lower cost. The financial struggles that people are experiencing have been spurred by the current cost of living crisis. Within the last 12-months, food prices have risen by 9.8% ([The Food Foundation, 2022](#)), and household energy costs by 19.6% ([The Guardian, 2022](#)). The rise in prices is hitting low-income households the hardest, as they spend a higher proportion of their income on household expenditures.

“ People are prioritising bills because they don’t want to get into debt and then they are left with nothing for food.

- Gina, Feltwell Pantry volunteer

Within the UK, the poorest fifth of households spend 47% of their budget on household expenditures, compared to 32% for the richest households ([Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 2022](#)). As well as this, low-income families are being impacted by the rising cost of supermarkets cheapest products, which they often rely on. These products have experienced some of the biggest food price increases, with items such as the

cheapest supermarket pasta rising in cost by 50% ([BBC News, 2022](#)).

“ Things are going up and up and up, so we are finding it harder and harder ... everyone is feeling it.

- Sylvia, ENYP member

The rising cost of living is driving people in a range of circumstances to access food hubs. This is reflected in the member base of the Breckland Mobile Store, with 34% of their members being employed or self-employed, 31% of their members being unemployed and 35% of their members retired.

The 9.4% inflation rate has led to a decrease in the real value of benefits ([BBC News, 2022](#)). Benefits have only been upgraded by 3.1% when inflation levels are now at 9.4% ([The Centre for Social Justice, 2022](#)). Consequently, the value of benefits is falling in real terms. This, combined with the removal of the £20 pandemic universal credit uplift, means that benefits can no longer cover the household expenditures that they used to. As a result, 47.7% of people on universal credit experienced food insecurity between October 2021-April 2022 ([The Food Foundation, 2022](#)).

“ During the winter months I found it very hard to survive on benefits in the benefits system ... running out of money before I got to the food bit. I was very hesitant to start with because I thought there are people worse off than me, but then I got to the point where I’ve got to use it ... since then I have been using it on and off and it has been a great help.

- Donna, Feltwell Pantry Member

However, it is not only those who are unemployed or on benefits that are struggling. The rise in costs due to inflation means that real income will drop by 4.1% this year, as wages are not rising at the same rate as inflation ([The Guardian, 2022](#)). This means that people's earnings are not increasing to meet the rising cost of living. This is reflected in the rising amount of people who are experiencing in-work poverty in the UK, with almost half of the people in poverty in the UK being employed.

The core aim of food hubs is to provide low-cost food to its members, so people can afford to buy food after they have paid for other household expenditures. At the Breckland Mobile Store, members saved an average of 56% on their food shopping in June 2022. Although the average savings do vary, this is a good reflection of the savings at the other food hubs in the Nourishing Norfolk Network.

“ It’s so much cheaper than a regular shop, that’s been a massive financial impact on people including myself.

- Nicole, Burrell Shop member and volunteer

Case Study

Helen works three part time jobs, and her husband works full time. They are struggling to afford food as their wages only cover nursery costs and household bills. Helen says the Breckland mobile store has saved their lives. It means their money can go a bit further and allows them to be able to buy food, instead of having to rely on handouts from family and friends.



The food hubs also provide support schemes to help their members with food affordability, for example through the Household Support Fund. The Household Support Fund was created in partnership with Norfolk County Council and the Department of Work and Pensions to provide a straightforward route for frontline voluntary, community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to deliver vital food aid and/or support with household fuel costs to people in our local community who were facing particular challenges over the winter months.

Using the Household Support Fund, The Burrell Shop provided its members with £50 credit to spend within the shop at Christmas, and a following £25 to spend at Easter. Members reported that the credit added to their account was a big help during the holidays and meant they could buy nice things in the shop to celebrate, as well as their everyday necessities.

The Shrublands Food Club has implemented a saving scheme in which their members can pay money into their shop account, which can be used as credit and converted into points to use in the store when needed. This saving scheme is a way to help their members budget and means that members will still have money to spend on food at the end of the month or for special occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.

“ **Our £50 credit has come to an end and wow has it made a huge difference! So many of our shoppers burst into tears in relief, have told us numerous times that it's made the difference between having Christmas and not, being able to use the heating and not live in a cold home which in itself creates other issues. Some shoppers have been able to add in healthy treats such as fresh fish fillets to cook and turkey crowns for Christmas Day meal. And of course, we were able to ensure all households had access to store cupboard basics and festive treats too.**

- Organisation who received support from the Household Support Fund



Physical accessibility

Something in my neighbourhood for me

Food hubs provide people with convenient access to affordable food. Accessing affordable food is difficult for people in both rural and urban areas. In rural areas, it can be difficult to access big supermarkets as they are often located within urban areas. This means that people either need to be able to drive and pay for fuel or be able to afford public transport. In urban areas, easily accessible food is often limited to convenience stores. To access big supermarkets, people often have to be able to walk long distances and carry their shopping, drive, or afford public transport. The convenience stores which are easily accessible in urban areas are often more expensive than big supermarkets and

are therefore difficult for people on low incomes to rely on. However, for some people, even the more affordable supermarkets can still be too expensive in the current cost of living crisis. The food hubs overcome this problem by being located in areas of need within a community, to provide affordable food.

“ **People on this estate have started seeing us a bit like a corner shop where they can come in and get really good value.**

- Gillian, Burrell Shop member and volunteer

Physical access to affordable food is particularly difficult for people living within Norfolk's isolated rural areas. Because of this, food hubs have been set up in rural villages such as Feltwell.

“ Our closest store is maybe 6/7 miles away ... people can't afford to drive to get to places, people can't afford to shop in Morrisons, Tesco or Asda and pay £5 delivery, that's another £5 added onto their weekly shopping.

- Julia, Feltwell Pantry volunteer



Feltwell Pantry

“ People who do use it find it really helpful money wise and convenience as well.

- Julia, Feltwell Pantry volunteer

Case study

Margaret has been struggling to live off her pension since prices have been going up. She doesn't drive, so she finds it difficult to get access to a big supermarket. Margaret said as soon as she heard about the Feltwell pantry she started coming all the time. It has helped with her grocery shopping which is one of her biggest bills, and the pantry's location in the village centre means that she does not have to struggle to physically access a supermarket anymore.



The Burrell Shop

The Breckland Mobile Store has also been created to drive around rural areas in Breckland. Norfolk is a rural county, with 49.2% of people in Norfolk living in rural areas ([Norfolk County Council, 2021](#)).

The majority of Norfolk's older population live in rural areas, with 60% of people aged 65 and over living rurally ([Norfolk County Council, 2021](#)). The mobile store means that people who live within these isolated rural areas can have access to affordable food.

“ We don't drive and live rurally, the local shop continuously puts up his prices and we simply could not afford to buy food from there, without this scheme we would not eat.

- Ashley, Breckland Mobile Store member

“ It helps the community because our community is so small, we don't have a local shop at the moment.

- Georgia, Breckland Mobile Store member



Breckland Mobile Food Store

Case study

Amy and Tom are members of the Breckland Mobile Store. They find it difficult to access supermarkets as Amy has limited mobility and finds it painful to walk. Amy's electric mobility scooter is not allowed on buses, so she struggles to leave the village to shop for food. The Breckland Mobile Store means they are now able to buy food in their village. They love that they now have easy access to good quality food for a low price.



Breckland Mobile Food Store



Choice

Freedom to choose

Food hubs aim to provide its members with a choice of foods, including fresh, nutritious food that can be used to make healthy meals. Accessing healthy affordable food can be difficult for people, particularly those on low incomes. The poorest fifth of UK households would have to spend 47% of their disposable income on food in order to meet the costs of the government recommended healthy diet ([The Food Foundation, 2022](#)). This is because more healthy foods are nearly three times as expensive per calories as less healthy foods ([The Food Foundation, 2021](#)). Because of this, households are resorting to buying unhealthy foods as they are cheaper. Food hubs help to overcome this by providing people with a choice of affordable, healthy foods.

Case study

Nina works five jobs to support her family, but the cost-of-living crisis means that she is struggling financially. She is fearful of what the rise in prices will mean, especially through winter. The Burrell shop has helped a lot. It means that she can now enjoy food which she was struggling to afford and can choose from a range of products which can be used to make healthy meals for her family.

“ The hub is brilliant because its giving people access to reasonably priced, good quality, nutritious food.

- Billie, Burrell Shop Manager



“ There's a wide range of food for people to choose from at affordable prices.

- Andrea, The Feed Manager

Giving people the option of different foods to purchase means that people are given the dignity of choice when shopping in food hubs. This can also help people feel that they are in control of their life, as purchasing the food means that people are providing food for themselves, rather than feeling that they have to rely on hand-outs.

Case study

Kate is a member and volunteer at The Shrublands Food Club. The store helps her financially as, at the moment, she is struggling to pay rent and can only afford to use her car for essential trips. Shopping at The Shrublands Food Club has meant her money goes further. Kate also likes that you don't have to ask for food and can pay towards what you need, meaning that you keep your dignity when shopping at the food hub.

“ People want to choose their own items ... it makes them feel like they are in control again and doing things for themselves.

- Julia, Feltwell Pantry volunteer



“ I like that here you can choose what you want rather than going into say like a food bank and they give you items that maybe you don't actually want or eat

- Nicole, Burrell Shop member and volunteer





Building community relationships

A place for me to go

Food hubs are a place in the community where members can meet new people and build relationships. Their friendly volunteers and atmosphere make the food hubs a welcoming place for people to come, have a chat, and make new friends.

“ I go to see people and talk to people otherwise I don’t have many people to talk to.

Henry, Breckland Mobile Store member



Building these relationships and the subsequent community feel that emerges is important for members, especially those who are suffering from feelings of loneliness and isolation which is negatively impacting their mental health. Within Norfolk and East Suffolk, it is estimated that 68,000 people are suffering from loneliness ([Norfolk County Council, 2022](#)).

Case study

The Shrublands Wellbeing Group meet every Friday at the Shrublands Youth and Adult Centre where the Food Club is located. They started going as a group to use the food club during their meeting breaks and now the shop has become a part of their Friday. They have found that going to use the food club with the wellbeing group has really helped with their confidence in using the shop and meeting new people. The wellbeing group is planning to get involved more in the shop by coming up with recipe cards to be shared with other members of the Shrublands Food Club.



Older people are particularly vulnerable to loneliness, as they are more likely to experience contributing factors such as living alone, loss of friends or family, and illness. It is estimated that 38,000 lonely people in Norfolk are aged 65 and above ([Norfolk Age UK, 2021](#)). The food hubs help to tackle loneliness not only by building relationships with members, but also through creating and working within community spaces such as cafes, and through events and activities such as bingo, exercise classes, and wellbeing groups. Groups and activities such as these serve as an opportunity to meet new people and socialise, which can help someone’s wellbeing.

“ People who come in here are like a big family.

- Angela, Burrell Shop member

“ If we have helped brighten someone’s day and saved them a few pennies then that’s our job done.

- Billie, Burrell Shop Manager

Case study

Miriam has been finding it difficult to manage financially and has been struggling with her mental health since her mum died a few months ago. Not only has Soul Foundation helped her financially, but it has also helped her feel less isolated. Miriam likes to come into Soul Foundation Social Supermarket to chat to people. She says seeing happy smiley people has meant a lot to her, and it is nice for her to be able to see some different faces and have a little chat with people.

Wider support needs

Connecting me with help

Although the food hub's primary goal is to provide people with affordable food, they also offer other forms of support to help members with their wider support needs. This is important for members, as struggles with food security often intersect with other problems, such as debt, mental health and wellbeing, housing, and benefits.

“ The food brings everybody in, but there is so much else.

- Billie, Burrell Shop Manager

Case study

In Thetford, the Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) is on the other side of town to the Charles Burrell Centre where the Burrell Shop is located, meaning that people in need of the service often found it difficult to physically access. As well as this, the CAB Centre was often very busy which made it hard for people to get an appointment. CAB now come into the Charles Burrell Centre once a week for members of the Burrell Shop to access. It started off as drop-in sessions for people but, as it started becoming busier, members can now book appointments on Thursday mornings to speak to the CAB.

“ It's not just a food pantry, it's an information point which is so helpful.

- Donna, Feltwell Pantry member

One way this wider support is given is through help provided by food hubs staff. This can include helping their members access fuel and hygiene banks through the food hubs, as well as helping their members with everyday problems such as understanding bills. The trust that is developed between the staff and their members helps to build the relationship that is needed for staff to be able to give this support to members.

The Burrell Shop



“ We give as much information as we can to get the help that is out there.

- Gina, Feltwell Pantry volunteer

If a member needs support which is beyond the capacity of food hub staff, they can be signposted to other services. Across the food hubs, these includes services such as Citizens Advice Bureau, debt advice, job clubs, and budgeting courses. The relationship that is built between staff and members means that the referral to other services is done by someone who members trust.

Case study

Rachel and May are sisters. They shop at the ENYP Social Supermarket on behalf of their dad, who they are carers for. Whenever they come into shop, they always get a cup of tea from the café. They love that coming to the food hub not only means that they have access to affordable food for their dad, but also that it gives them the opportunity to have a chat, meet new people and get any advice and support they might need.

“ It's not just about getting cheap shopping either, there is all sorts of support.

- Gina, Feltwell Pantry volunteer



Feltwell Pantry

The ability for food hubs to do a trusted referral is especially important for people who might not have the confidence to contact an organisation on their own, or their previous experiences make them reluctant. In these situations, staff at the food hubs can be a reassuring contact to enable an individual to receive support.



Conclusion

So much more than food

It is clear that the current cost of living crisis is resulting in a wide range of people struggling to access healthy, affordable food. The food hubs in the Nourishing Norfolk Network are vital in ensuring people in Norfolk have access to food which can form a healthy diet, at an affordable price.

“ I’m a single mum so it really helps me with my finances.

- Holly, Shrublands Food Club member

The affordable food that the food hubs provide mean that the hubs are having a great financial impact on its members. The price of the food means that people can afford food where they previously have struggled. Schemes within the food hubs such as the distribution of the Household Support Fund and the saving scheme mean that people have access to extra financial support and to a tool to help them budget.

The physical access to affordable food that the food hubs provide is especially important in a rural county such as Norfolk. In rural areas, access to a supermarket can be difficult,



particularly for those who do not drive or struggle to afford fuel or bus fares. This can lead to people having to rely on convenience stores, which are often more expensive than big supermarkets. Having food hubs, such as the Breckland Mobile Food Store, that are present within these rural locations, means that people in rural areas can access affordable food, allowing them to experience the financial impact of food hubs.

“ It’s in the centre of the village and so many people can get to it so easily.

- Lucy, Feltwell Pantry member

“ You don’t feel like you are judged.

- Esme, Soul Foundation member

Providing people with a choice of food is one of the key elements of the food hubs. Not only does it mean that people are given a choice of different foods, including food to make healthy meals as well as treats, but it also gives people the dignity of choice. Offering a choice of foods helps people feel that they are in control of their life and are not having to rely on a handout, consequently helping to reduce stigma which can be associated with food provision models.

Food hubs are a community space with a welcoming and friendly atmosphere. They provide an opportunity to meet new people and build relationships. They aid in the building of relationships through events and activities such as bingo and wellbeing groups. Providing a

space to meet people and form relationships is important as it helps to tackle the prevalent problem of loneliness, improving people’s wellbeing and mental health.

“ It’s nice that you can go somewhere and have a chat.

- Maggie, Burrell Shop member

The relationships that the food hub staff build with their members means that they are in a trusted position to offer wider support. This can be in the form of food hubs staff supporting their members with everyday problems or being able to signpost to other services if needed. This allows members to get the support they need with problems that often intersect with food security struggles.

We know that food is just the beginning. Food hubs have already shown to build people’s resilience and tackle root causes of hunger to build a stronger, healthier Norfolk.

[Find out more >](#)





Together, Norfolk shines brighter

Find out more or get in touch

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