

# Your Local **PANTRY**

## Dignity, Choice, Hope Social impact report 2021



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**Dr Naomi Maynard  
and Dr Fiona Tweedie  
February 2021**

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## Your Local Pantry franchise partners



Church Action on Poverty is a national ecumenical Christian social justice charity, committed to tackling poverty in the UK. We work in partnership with churches and with people in poverty themselves to find solutions to poverty, locally, nationally and globally.

Further information can be found at [www.church-poverty.org.uk](http://www.church-poverty.org.uk)

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Further information can be found at [www.stockporthomes.org](http://www.stockporthomes.org)

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# If Your Local Pantry had 100 members...

**95**

would say being a member has improved their household finances

**98**

would say tackling food waste is important to them

**70**

would feel more connected to their local community through the Pantry

**69**

would say being a member has improved their physical health

**76**

would say being a member has improved their mental health

**57**

would have made new friends at the Pantry

**59**

would say they are eating less processed food

**54**

would say they now eat more fresh fruit and vegetables

**10**

would volunteer at the Pantry

# Key figures



**35 PANTRIES IN THE YOUR LOCAL PANTRY NETWORK ACROSS THE UK**



**4,845** HOUSEHOLDS ARE MEMBERS – INCLUDING **7,976** ADULTS AND **5,449** CHILDREN

**£3.50–£5.00**

WEEKLY FEE FOR MEMBERSHIP, SET BY THE PANTRIES



A TYPICAL FOOD BASKET IS VALUED AT **£20** – SAVING MEMBERS AT LEAST **£15** EACH VISIT

HOUSEHOLDS WHO VISIT WEEKLY CAN SAVE **OVER £780** PER YEAR

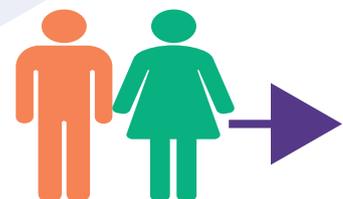


**116,000 HOURS**

CONTRIBUTED EACH YEAR BY **360** VOLUNTEERS IN THE YOUR LOCAL PANTRY NETWORK



**OVER 68,000** VISITS SINCE THE NETWORK BEGAN IN 2014



# Introduction

“When people get in touch about starting a Pantry, they usually have experience of charitable food projects of one kind or another. In 2020 many were councils, grappling with food provision in a national emergency and looking for something new: something local people can lead, something that isn’t constantly grant-seeking but which pays its own way. “And that’s what a Pantry is – it’s not charity – it’s not a food bank. It’s a food club that helps your money go further. You can join without being referred and remain a member for as long as you wish.”

*Gillian Oliver, Your Local Pantry Development Worker*

Your Local Pantry was formed by Stockport Homes Group in 2013, just as austerity began to bite. They noticed that several of their tenants were constantly struggling to make ends meet. They needed something different from a food bank – which is designed to provide short-term emergency support. Through Your Local Pantry they built a social franchise, which is different from a food bank in a number of important ways:

- **Member-run:** Pantries are run along co-operative lines, by and for their members, many of the volunteers who run the Pantry are members too.
- **Open to all:** Membership is open to anyone local, with no requirement to be referred by a professional or other third party.
- **Choice:** You can choose what you want, using a colour-coded system to ensure that this includes a balance of fresh, packaged and higher-value foods.
- **Quality:** Your Local Pantry insists on good quality food, including fresh fruit and vegetables, frozen and chilled food, including meat and dairy products, alongside the usual supplies of tins and packets.  
The Your Local Pantry package creates the look and feel of a little local shop with uniformed staff who manage the store by hand-held technology. This elevates the experience by reducing stigma and calms anxiety.
- **No time limits:** membership is not time-limited; members can choose to come every week (or not) for as long as they want.

Your Local Pantry is now in a roll-out phase, supported by Church Action on Poverty, Thrive Birmingham, St Andrew’s Community Network Liverpool and Faith in Community Scotland.

The national network is 35 strong, and growing, with the benefits of the model clearly evident:

- **Saving money on grocery bills:** Over £15 a week or if a member visits weekly, £780 a year
- **Saving food from landfill:** Through environmental charity FareShare, Your Local Pantry draws on the oversupply in supermarket supply chains
- **Enhancing nutrition and food variety:** Through a commitment to offering fresh and frozen, chilled and seasonal produce
- **Knitting neighbourhoods together:** Through the weekly shop, with familiar faces, fighting isolating and signposting to other services
- **Developing employability:** Through a range of volunteering opportunities, developing skills through systems governing stock and software, payments, communication and environmental health.

And now, thanks to the generosity of Your Local Pantry members in sharing their experiences, we’re able to confidently claim this and more. Throughout this report we have listened to how members articulate the human aspects of Pantry membership, which add up to more than the savings you can achieve. One member said her Pantry visits evoked the spirit of the “wash house days” (which, in much earlier epidemic days drew people together out of a shared need to keep clean). In these days of similar crisis, the art is the same: to offer dignity and choice in neighbourhood settings.

“Helping people have hope, that’s what the Pantry is about, helping people have hope, dignity and choice, even if you don’t have anything else, if you have those, you can survive.”

*Volunteer at Peckham Pantry, London  
– quote kindly supplied by Peckham Pantry evaluation team*

“Being a Pantry member means ‘healthier meals, less stress, more money to pay bills’”

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

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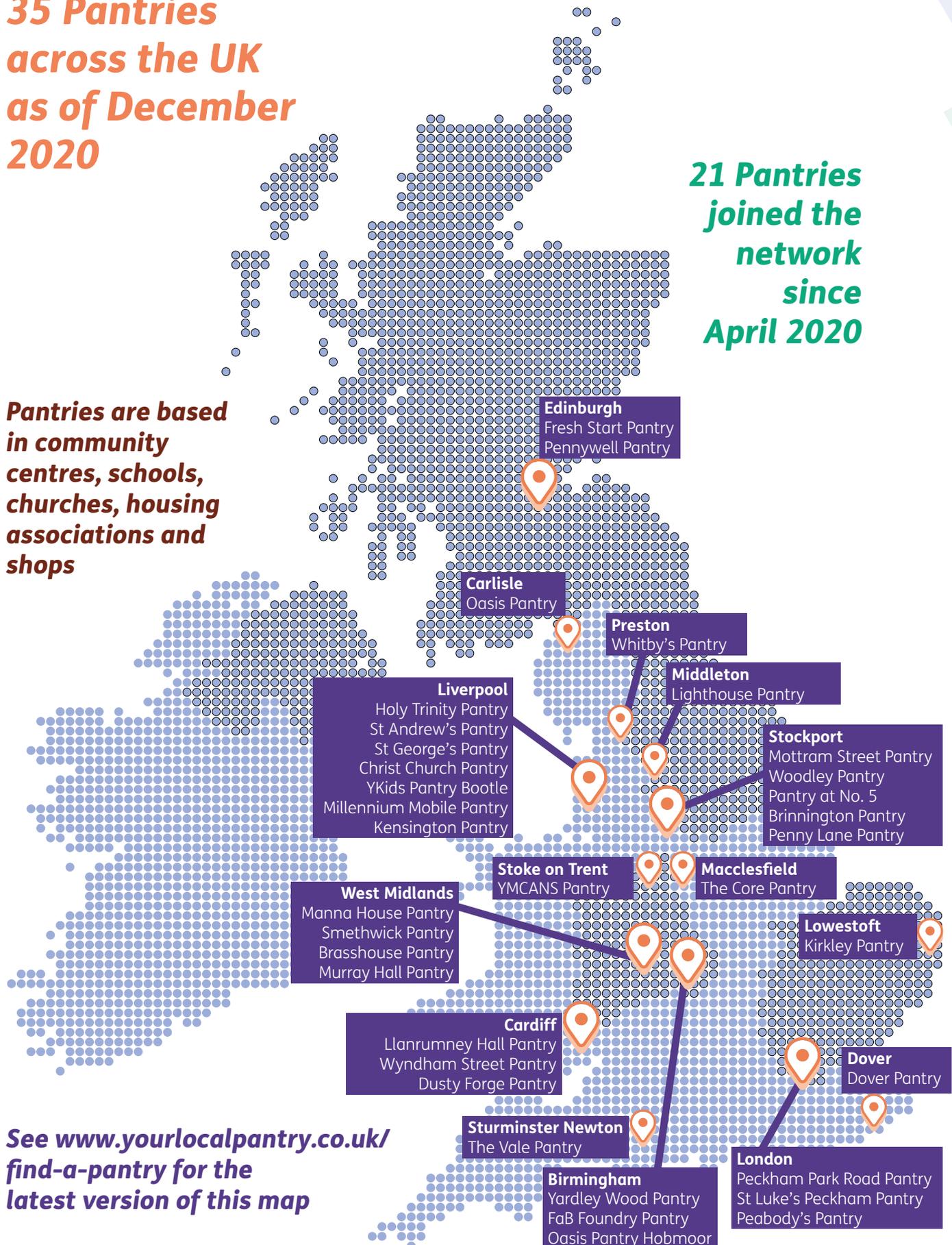
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# Network map

**35 Pantries  
across the UK  
as of December  
2020**

**21 Pantries  
joined the  
network  
since  
April 2020**

**Pantries are based  
in community  
centres, schools,  
churches, housing  
associations and  
shops**



**See [www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/  
find-a-pantry](http://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk/find-a-pantry) for the  
latest version of this map**

# Understanding the social impact of Pantries

In this report we have sought to listen, explore and understand the difference being a member of a Pantry has made to households across the UK.

We did this through:

- A **member survey** completed online, over the telephone or in person at 19 Pantries in the Network. During October 2020, 490 members completed the survey: a third of all members who visited their Pantry during this month.
- Gathering **stories** from Pantry members. We are grateful to staff and volunteers at Stockport, Liverpool and London Pantries for supporting this.
- A **stocktake audit** to understand the value of a Pantry visit. This was led by Stocktake UK during September and October 2020. Stocktake UK developed a bespoke auditing system with Lighthouse Pantry in Middleton, comparing Pantry stock against a TESCO price base. This system was then used in Middleton, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Birmingham and has provided figures for this report.
- A **Pantry survey** about their volunteers. 24 Pantries took part in this survey during November 2020 to help us understand how many volunteers support the Pantry Network. 48 volunteers also shared their experiences as Pantry volunteers.
- The Your Local Pantry **database**. Pantry data, including the total number of Pantries, visits, members and people connected through the Your Local Pantry Network, was provided on 1st December 2020.

This report does not evaluate the Your Local Pantry model or the practices of individual Pantries.

## Our member survey respondents

490 members responded to our survey.

They represent their households, which contained 538 children, 806 adults aged 16–64, and 115 older people aged 65 or over.

These members came from all kinds of household types, from multigenerational families to single elderly people. 48% of member households are families; of these, 33% are single-parent households.

9% were aged 65 or over, 62% of those are living alone.

73% of these member households were White; 14% were Black. Other ethnicities each represented less than 4%.



**“As a struggling working family it has helped me feel less of a failure for not being able to provide the basics that we need. I hope it gets bigger and helps more people.”**

*Dusty Forge, Cardiff*

# What's important to our members?

Your Local Pantry's last social impact report in 2018 identified a variety of reasons why members value being a member of their Pantry. For this 2021 impact report, we asked members how important these aspects are to them and their households. We found that...



**EVERY** member said that saving money on the weekly shop is important



**98%** said tackling food waste is important, almost two thirds said this is very important



**97%** said knowing that their Pantry belongs to the local community is important



**97%** said that increasing the amount of fresh and healthy food eaten in their household is important



**96%** said increasing the variety of food eaten in their household is important



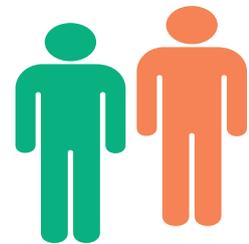
**95%** said being able to choose their own food is important



**71%** said having a say in the decisions about running a Pantry is important



**86%** said increasing the overall amount of food eaten in their household is important



**85%** said making friends with others in their local community is important



**71%** said having the opportunity to volunteer at the Pantry is important

# Improving household financial wellbeing

**“Being a Pantry member has made a dramatic difference to my financial situation. As a single parent things can be extremely tight. The Pantry provides plenty to enable me to prepare meals and snacks. And the staff are a bonus! It’s taken a burden from my shoulders.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

For every member, the potential savings made through Pantry membership are significant.

The Stocktake UK audit found that a typical food basket at a Pantry is worth over £20, saving members at least £15 each visit. For households that visit the Pantry each week, **they can save at least £780 per year.** These figures are based on the most conservative of the figures provided through the Stocktake UK audit, with the value of a food basket at some Pantries being significantly higher.

**“It’s just given us a little breathing space, allowing us to supplement our grocery shopping with a couple of extras! I plan my weekly shopping around the Pantry. I go Friday morning, see what I get that day, and see what else I need to buy to make a meal with the Pantry items”**

*Brinnington Pantry, Stockport*

We asked our members how their household is managing financially. Two out of five described their household financial situation as “just about getting by”, and a quarter said they are finding it difficult or very difficult.

**95% of members said that being a Pantry member had improved their financial situation, with 53% saying it made things a lot better.**

**“The Pantry is helping me a lot financially to make fresh healthy meals leaving me more able to pay my bills, which was something I was struggling to do. I was eating a lot of frozen food and struggling to put gas and leccy in my meter. Thanks to the Pantry this is no longer an issue.”**

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

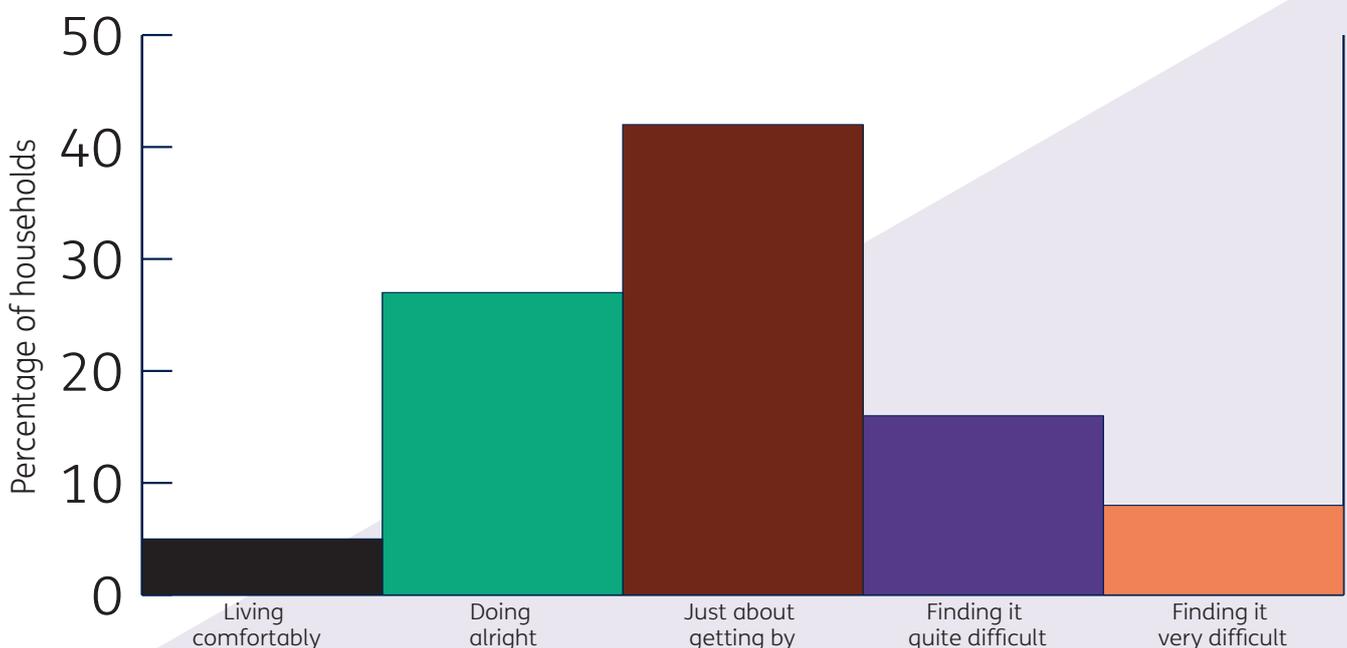
# 95%

**of members said that being a Pantry member had improved their financial situation**

**“It saves me so much money and I know I will always come away with things I wouldn’t usually be able to afford.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

## How well would you say your household is managing financially?



## What does your household do with the savings?

We asked Pantry members what their household does with the savings made through shopping at the Pantry.



A Pantry shop is designed to supplement, rather than fully replace, a household's regular food shop. The savings made on their household food bills through Pantry membership, has enabled some members to purchase **more or better quality food** at the supermarket.

**"It allows us a little flexibility on our other shopping needs, e.g. being able to buy a chicken for Sunday dinner"**

*Brinnington Pantry, Stockport*

**"Being a member has allowed my family to save money and buy more fresh meat that is halal, as they are Muslim and find it difficult to afford halal meat."**

*Fresh Start Pantry, Edinburgh*



Some members have been able to **save** the money they would have spent. Several members were saving for a particular event such as a child's birthday or for Christmas.

**"I have managed to save £300 to be able to use for Christmas, instead of using a money-lender"**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

**"We are saving for Christmas food for our family, and before I started saving for Christmas it has helped with my children's birthdays"**

*St Andrew's Pantry, Liverpool*

**"We saved the money saved and got new carpets for our front room"**

*Woodley Pantry, Stockport*



Others explained how they chose to deliberately use the savings to fund a particular **activity**. Savings made from Pantry membership have enabled children across the UK to attend activities including football, ballet, swimming, gymnastics, tennis and coding club.

Several members mentioned being able to afford **treat items or days out**, which they would not have been able to afford before. Parents and grandparents often emphasised that the money they saved went on children.

**"I have taken my son on cinema trips which was a rarity before and I've saved. I save as much as I can so that in an emergency I'm not left panicking. It will never be a lot but I feel like it's something."**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

**"The money I've saved means that I am able to treat my children with the occasional day out and also pay off debt."**

*Manna House Pantry, Birmingham*

**"We put the money saved on treats for the kids: movie night in every Saturday!"**

*Christ Church Pantry, Liverpool*

### Annie's story

Annie, in her thirties, has been a member of a Liverpool Pantry for nearly a year. Annie lives off a tight budget whilst caring for her young daughter Chloe.

Annie says being a member of the Pantry has made "a massive difference financially". Noticing that supermarket food prices have gone up, Annie was concerned how they would get through the pandemic, but found the savings she has made on food bills have "helped immensely".

With the money they have saved, Annie and Chloe's dad Kurt (who is also a Pantry member) were able to put aside enough money to take Chloe on a small camping trip. Annie explains that they wouldn't have been able to afford this trip without the savings made through the Pantry.

For Annie, having a Pantry near to where she lives is incredibly important. Due to a disability, Annie has to get taxis to the nearest supermarkets, so being able to walk to the Pantry helps reduce the amount she usually spends on taxis.

Annie has loved the social side of the Pantry and enjoys coming, saying she's not embarrassed to be a member of a Pantry.



# Supporting a healthy and nutritious diet

54% of all members said their household is eating more fresh fruit and vegetables and 59% are eating less processed food since joining the Pantry. 36% of members said their households were now eating more protein, such as meat, fish and eggs.

36% of members say they have seen big changes to their diet, eating **both** more fruit and vegetables and less processed food.

When budgets are tight, eating a balanced, healthy diet, which contains fresh fruit and vegetables, may be unaffordable. Healthy food can often take a back seat to food that is higher in calories, allowing you to feel full for longer. With a quarter of members describing their financial circumstances as difficult or very difficult, members described the Pantry as a vital “lifeline” to

**54%**  
eat **MORE** fresh  
fruit and veg

**“I don’t feel  
so stressed  
about how  
I’m going to  
feed  
my kids”**

*Manna House Pantry,  
Birmingham*

ensure their household can eat healthy and nutritious food. Several members commented how Pantry membership, both the financial savings and the food on offer through the Pantry, has enabled them to **choose to eat healthier food**.

Unfortunately, household incomes have been stagnant or falling, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and the longer-term effects of austerity and welfare reforms. Coupled with a rise in food prices, this means that until the safety net is strengthened and household incomes are adequate, Pantries will continue to play an important role in supporting households experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity.

**“As single mum I am finding it financially hard but with Pantry I know my son and I both can have**





**36%**  
eat **MORE** protein

some yummy food and I can cook fresh meals”

*Yardley Wood Pantry, Birmingham*

“I have been able to make healthier and nutritious meals such as cottage pie, chicken stir fry and am able to freeze and reheat throughout the week”

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

Almost half said that their household **ate more food** as a result of being a member of a Pantry, with more than one member commenting how Pantry membership has enabled them to eat more meals themselves,

“We are now able to have fresh home-cooked healthy meals with a small treat afterwards”

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

**44%**  
are eating **MORE** food in general

**59%**  
eat **LESS** processed food

whereas before they were prioritising feeding their children.

“I don’t feel so stressed about how I’m going to feed my kids. Now I eat at least one meal every two days, whereas without Manna House I just had kids’ left-overs.”

*Manna House Pantry, Birmingham*

“We are now able to have fresh home-cooked healthy meals with a small treat afterwards. Which has made me feel better knowing my children are eating properly and I am not skipping meals because I cannot afford it”

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

Pantries stock a wide variety of foods, which are often different each week. Two thirds of members are **trying new foods** they hadn’t had before, with several commenting that the low weekly cost of membership meant it was less of a ‘risk’ to try new foods.

**66%**  
are trying new foods

## Sandra’s story

Sandra is in her forties; she joined Woodley Pantry in Stockport over a year ago to save money. For her the best thing about being a Pantry member is “it saves us lots of money. What I get at the Pantry keeps us going all week. The majority of our meals are from the Pantry.”

“Oh Pantry is the highlight of my week, we love trying new things and there’s lots of variety”. Before Covid-19, Sandra and her friends would also enjoy a biscuit and brew at their Pantry, an important time in their week.

If I wasn’t a Pantry member “we’d be spending more money on a food shop. We also wouldn’t be preparing healthy meals. Having the Pantry open is the one thing you know that’s going to be here in these uncertain times. We get up early for this!”

Members had become more creative in their cooking. Pantry membership can enable people to find joy in cooking, creating positive food memories, where food becomes about more than calorie intake and survival.

**“Since signing up I have never looked back. I have always been fond of cooking but have found I’ve been more creative since joining the Pantry as sometimes when money’s tight, it’s a risk to buy something new chance it’s not what you thought. I love the challenge of using everything up I get from the Pantry and trying new things.”**

*Pantry at No. 5, Stockport*

**“I did a cooking course at a local primary school through the Pantry and I learned how to make a few meals I have never tried before such as a new spicy rice full of veg and flavour and mixed bean tortilla that are now a firm favourite in my house.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

## Vikki’s story

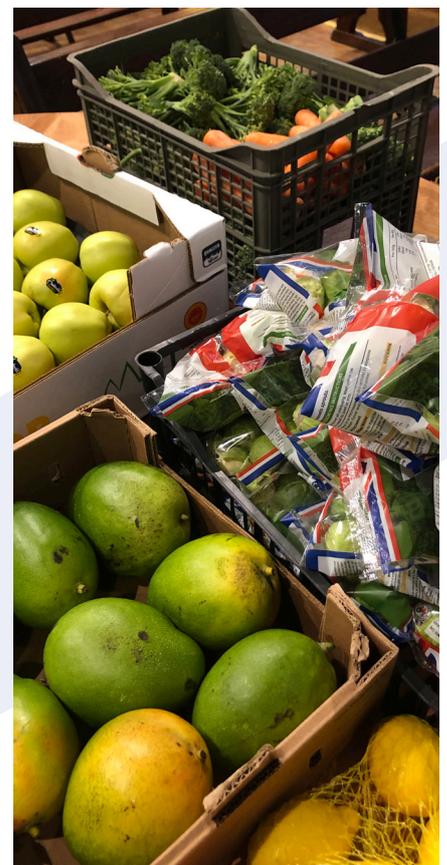
Vikki joined Dusty Forge Pantry in Cardiff a year ago, when she was pregnant with her first child. She has a special diet and was relieved to find the Pantry caters for her needs.

“I don’t drive and as a full-time carer to an elderly parent I quite often had difficulty sourcing easy to prepare foods for myself locally as I am coeliac and vegan. Despite being in quite a small minority food group, Pantry has been fabulous as there is always something there each week I can eat when it’s difficult to shop further afield.

“It’s also helped with our household’s weekly food costs as with me being vegan and coeliac and my dad being somewhat of a picky eater, it quite often means my having to prepare separate meals as opposed to one family meal which made shopping on a tight budget tricky.

“My son is now almost one year old and enjoys his Pantry visits. We often come away with some of his favourite fruits and veggies and it’s helped him eat well through weaning.

“Being a carer I also enjoy my weekly visit as outside of the current social distancing measures it was nice to be able to sit and chat with fellow community members whilst waiting our turn. Caring can be isolating so anything that gives you an outlet to meet and chat to others in a friendly environment is a bonus. The staff are lovely and always welcoming, I look forward to continuing my membership through pregnancy number 2 and hopefully volunteering myself eventually!”



# Enhancing mental and physical wellbeing

**“It helps our food budget go further, which in turn leads to less stress, also there’s a social side to it. There’s a group of us who always meet up now, we go to Pantry together, have a brew together, we’ve become great friends, and we’re from three different generations! That’s great for people’s mental wellbeing!”**

*Brinnington Pantry, Stockport*

76% said being a member of the Pantry had been good for their **mental health**, rising to 88% of those who were finding it very difficult financially.

69% of members agreed that the Pantry had been good for their **physical health**, rising to 74% of elderly people.

Several members noticed that being a member of the Pantry had reduced their **anxiety**.

In particular, for members who described their household financial situation as just about managing, or difficult, Pantry membership relived the daily worries of if there will be enough money (or food) to adequately provide for their household.

Members described how being a member of a Pantry gave them a “peace of mind” knowing that they would have at least a few healthy meals that week.

As outlined previously, members mentioned that the savings made through Pantry had helped **relieve their financial worries**, enabling them to pay household bills or repay debts. Several identified how this had positively affected their mental wellbeing.

**“It has definitely helped me mentally in a way that I worry less about my money budget for the week and I think less of what to put on my shopping list as whatever I get from the**

## 76% said being a member of the Pantry had been good for their mental health

**Pantry I will make a meal from, sometimes it can be a something we usually have like a Bolognese other times we’ve had so much veg we have had something new like a stir fry or a very hearty stew I can make last a few days. So in that way it has helped me mentally because I think about things less, and save and try new things rather than fret and panic over what to do next.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

**“I’m less anxious about money for food, I know we will have a few good meals per week”**

*St George’s Pantry, Liverpool*

Several members, including volunteers, highlighted how being a Pantry member had been good for their mental health as it helped reduce social isolation and gave them a sense of purpose (see also page 18).

**“The weekly visit keeps my social skills active since my depression and confidence dropped I now look forward to the visits.”**

*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

**“I was very lonely and going to the Pantry helped me make friends who support my mental health as we talk outside the Pantry.”**

*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

**“It has helped greatly with my mental health being a volunteer at the Pantry. I feel more confident, I have a purpose and have new skills and friends.”**

*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

**“I’ve noticed improvements in mental health due to feeling part of a community project”**

*Penny Lane Pantry, Stockport*



# 69% of members agreed that the Pantry had been good for their physical health

**“I was very lonely and going to the Pantry helped me make friends.”**

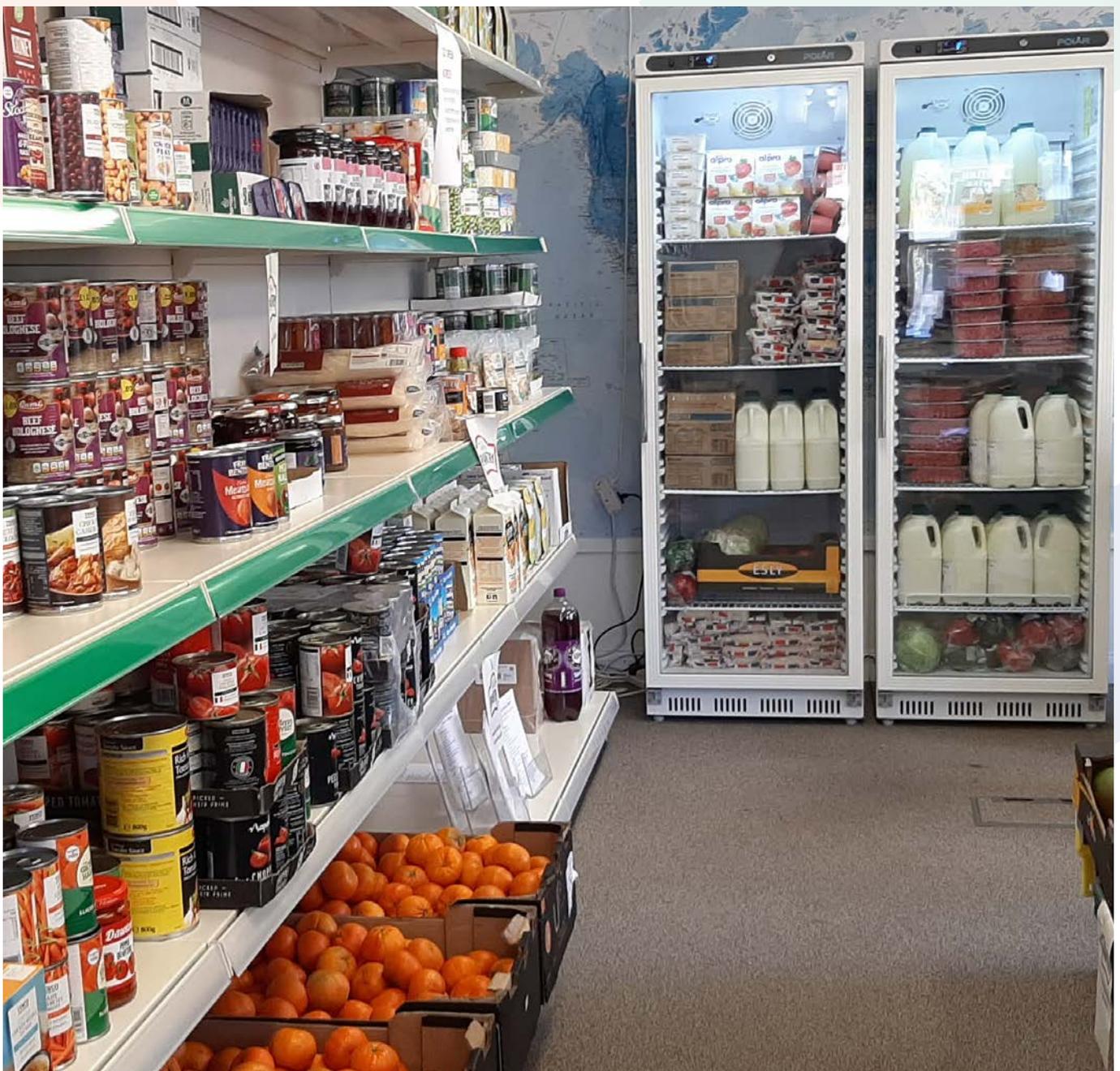
*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

Aside from the health benefits related to eating a healthier and more nutritious diet, several members explain how Pantry membership had benefited their physical health as they walked to their Pantry. One single, adult member said the saving had enabled him to afford to go to the gym, and improve his physical health; several children had attended sport classes due to

the savings made through Pantry membership.

**“It’s the only time I go out so more exercise, the variety of food enables me to try new things, being creative with the food is great for my mental health”**

*Lighthouse Pantry, Middleton*



# Strengthening local communities

Pantries play an important role in developing and strengthening local communities.

Rooted in their local communities, many Pantries have chosen to place geographical restrictions around who can become a member of their Pantry. This encourages Pantries to become and remain spaces which serve and **strengthen local community networks**.

**93%**  
say the Pantry has allowed them to meet people and socialise

Nearly every member, 97%, said it was important to them that their Pantry belongs to their local community. 70% of members feel more connected to their local community through being a member of a Pantry.

**“Feeling the old community spirit, like the wash house days”**  
*St George’s Pantry, Liverpool*

**“Community spirit all the way, it brings the community together and it makes people feel part of something.”**  
*Manna House Pantry, Birmingham*

**57%**  
have made new friends at the Pantry

Being able to make **new friends** was an important aspect of the Pantry model, with 85% of members saying this was important to them. 57% of

**70%**  
feel more connected to the local community

members had made new friends at their Pantry, with some members commenting that they had reconnected with their neighbours through the Pantry.

**“Before the lockdown in March we started with round tables and we’d sit down, have tea, coffee, toast, biscuits and all that, good chat and all that, and I said but the only problem with that, people wouldn’t go home! Because they were having deep conversations and we were just bringing tea, and coffee, and more toast!”**

*Volunteer at St George’s Pantry, Liverpool*

**79%**  
feel like valued members of the Pantry

Pantries can also play a part in **strengthening the local economy**. Several Pantries reinvest their membership fees to purchase additional stock, taking care where possible to support local businesses with their purchases.

**“Brings it all back to the community and feels like we are shopping local. I prefer this to shopping at a supermarket.”**  
*Fresh Start Pantry, Edinburgh*

## Connecting with other community services

Pantries are often community hubs, either hosting additional services themselves, or connecting members to other community services.

13% of members had been connected to an additional service through the Pantry. These included:

- debt advice
- cooking classes
- volunteering opportunities
- recovery groups
- local welfare support schemes
- pastoral and spiritual support
- and for one member, a dementia nurse to support their partner.

In some Pantries these take place within the regular Pantry sessions, or at the same venue as the Pantry. Kensington Fields Pantry in Liverpool runs a community Bingo morning immediately before the Pantry opens, they also have a financial adviser on hand to speak with members during the session. Lighthouse Pantry is situated within Middleton Shopping Mall Community Hub. The hub includes a men’s shed, benefits and legal advice services, community computers, a bike workshop and a community café, alongside the Pantry.

**“I got help with a grant for a cooker this was so helpful because I couldn’t cook. They gave me a slow cooker while I was waiting for the cooker to arrive. I was overwhelmed!”**  
*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

**“I received help and support to apply for funding for new furniture when I moved house.”**  
*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

# Fostering dignity and agency

**“There’s no stigma going the Pantry, everyone uses it”**

*Kensington Fields Pantry, Liverpool*

**“I feel happy and don’t feel ashamed going in here, or feel like I’m being judged. Everyone is treated the same.”**

*Manna House Pantry, Birmingham*

**“I feel like a real person not someone just rooting around for the cheapest food I can find because I know how much it’s going to cost”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

Pantries are open to everyone in their local community, without having to be ‘referred’ by a professional or other person in authority, or having to provide ‘evidence’ of need. Members valued this, there is no shame or stigma in being a Pantry member.

**“I like that the Pantry is for everyone not just people on benefits, as there is a lot of working low-income families too.”**

*Pantry at No. 5, Stockport*

For several, being a Pantry member was a source of pride. For those who were struggling, they were proud to be paying for their shop, rather than receiving charity. Some members were also proud that their community is playing a part in tackling food waste.

**“It’s not embarrassing like a food bank.”**

*Kensington Fields Pantry, Liverpool*

Others, like Natalie, have chosen to financially reinvest in their Pantries, echoing a cooperative model. One member, who was themselves struggling financially at the moment, articulated how they were proud to be a member as they knew their membership fee helped others in their time of need.

For 71% of members, having a say in how the Pantry was run was an important aspect of their membership.

**“Being a member saves me money, we eat better, feel part of the community, valued and listened to.”**

*St George’s Pantry, Liverpool*

## Natalie’s story

Natalie, who lives with her husband and grown-up children, is a volunteer and Pantry member at St George’s, Liverpool.

“Being a member has really helped me, especially in the last month as I was made redundant. Thinking about food, I know I am going to get a nice roast dinner for the weekend and then I’ve got stuff to keep me going through the week. Some people feel ashamed going to food banks, you feel like you are getting labelled. In the Pantry you are actually paying for stuff. It makes me feel, I have paid for me shop.

“The best thing for me in the Pantry on a Friday is chatting with the people as they come in. I love talking. I was born and bred in this area, so I do know quite a lot of people who come through. I’ve seen people during the lockdown who were struggling, people who were scared to come out the house. And coming up here, it might be the only time they see someone in the week. For me it’s seeing everyone coming in, and just seeing what we can do, the love we can give to people.

“The team are fantastic, we all work together. There are some moments when we are all really happy and we can have some deep conversations. It has got to be the only time, especially during the lockdown, I think ‘I can’t wait to go to the Pantry’, showered, washed hair. Everything!”

“Some of the money I been saving from going to the shops, believe it or not I have been buying things for the Pantry. Soaps, bleaches, the cleaning stuff. The money I save, it sounds a bit mad, but the shopping I get for my £3.50 leaves me money to put back into the Pantry!”

**“The Pantry feels more like a cooperative, where we all pull our resources together to enable us to get good food.”**

*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*



# Tackling food waste

Your Local Pantry is a member of environmental charity FareShare, who are committed to tackling food waste through redistributing surplus food to charities. Each Pantry receives a weekly FareShare delivery, containing items which would otherwise go to waste. Each week Pantry stock is different, one week a FareShare delivery may include a box of mangos, another week it has frozen pizzas, and another, a crate of smoothies.

Reducing food waste was the second most important reason for members to be part of their Pantry, with 98% of members saying that it is important to them, and almost two-thirds saying that it is very important to them.

Tackling food waste is a foundational part of the wider Your Local Pantry model. Along with receiving food and reducing their household food bills, members

are able to play an active part in making their communities more environmentally sustainable.

For some members who may have been dependant on charity in the past, or who feel they are in some way a burden to society, playing a part in tackling food waste and caring for the planet was a way to **“give back”** or be a part of something positive.

Through engaging with a Pantry, some members have become more aware of the impact food waste can have on the environment.

**“I now explore different food choices, and through meeting and exchanging ideas, experiment with meal planning and cooking preparation. I am also more appreciative of food and not wasting food, thinking about its impact on the environment, being able to circulate food.”**

*Peabody's Pantry, Chingford*

**“I now appreciate food and food waste a lot more.”**

*Christ Church Pantry, Liverpool*

During the pandemic, several organisations and community groups became involved in food provision for the first time. Pantries such as FaB (Foundry and Boulton) Foundry Pantry developed by Oasis Foundry, emerged out of the realisation that several items within the emergency food parcels their team of local community groups and volunteers were distributing, were going to waste. The items weren't what the beneficiary wanted or needed that week. Looking for a more sustainable approach, they explored the Your Local Pantry model, to offer members choice and eliminate unnecessary food waste.



# A 'lifesaver' during the pandemic

In the Covid-19 pandemic, Pantries found themselves in lockdown and had to reimagine their operations.

**"They helped me more than they could imagine. They help with finances. It is someone to talk to over the fence in these really bad times."**

*St George's Pantry, Liverpool*

**"If it wasn't for the Pantry I would have struggled during the first lockdown, so being a member saved me and my children."**

*Christ Church Pantry, Liverpool*

The Pantry model proved to be resilient and flexible during the pandemic, and made a significant difference in the lives of Pantry members.

**"It has been a lifesaver."**

*Yardley Wood Pantry, Birmingham*

During the initial lockdown in April 2020, several Pantries quickly adapted to delivery models, ensuring members were still able to receive a weekly Pantry shop without leaving their homes. Your Local Pantry facilitated a

conference in May so Pantries could share ideas and best practice across the network.

As the summer continued many Pantries were able to reopen, with members praising the care and attention paid to safety during the pandemic.

For some members, the savings made through the Pantry helped during particularly challenging times, including being furloughed, unemployment and having children at home for extended periods of time.

**"It has helped with living cost, since losing my job. Knowing there is going to be a few good cooked meals during the week."**

*Manna House Pantry, Birmingham*

**"With the kids off, it helped with shopping costs."**

*St Andrew's Pantry, Liverpool*

**"It has been really beneficial, especially as I have been affected by the furlough and my salary has decreased. It has helped with my children's packed lunch items for**

**school as we fell through the gap of free school meals."**

*Peabody's Pantry, Chingford*

Weekly deliveries, or socially distanced visits to their local Pantry, reduced the need for members to visit large shops, and use public transport.

**"Having the Pantry on my doorstep has helped me not having to go to supermarkets and put myself at risk."**

*Whitby's Pantry, Preston*

**"In the first stages of the lockdown, I don't think I could have coped without the Pantry. I didn't have time to queue at the shop after work and the few times I attempted it, the shelves were bare! The Pantry guys delivered our bags and some cheer each week."**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

Members appreciate the food provided through the Pantry; however, many also highlighted the additional value of continued social contact made possible by Pantries.

**"Food was delivered to me and really helped with my anxiety through lockdown, also nice to see a friendly face."**

*Yardley Wood Pantry, Birmingham*

**"The support during the pandemic was amazing and the Pantry volunteers did a fantastic job in helping the community and making their services accessible, and also supporting families not only by delivering and keeping themselves and members safe with social distancing, but checking in asking about how we were getting on and genuinely caring for members' wellbeing."**

*St George's Pantry, Liverpool*

**"With everything that's going on, people being socially distanced, it's a good opportunity, even if it is brief, seeing someone when you are just a few metres away,**



**having that little exchange, it means a lot."**

*Peabody's Pantry, Chingford*

Some Pantries were able to include additional extras to support members during the pandemic, such as activity packs for children, toiletries or cleaning products, hand sanitiser and even seeds for the garden!

**21 new Pantries have joined since April 2020**

Pantries have not only adapted during the pandemic, several have started! The network has more than doubled in size since the start of the pandemic.



### Danni's story

"As a first-time single mum of a 10-month-old baby boy when Covid-19 lockdown hit, I was very scared. I had dealt with a significant episode of postnatal depression and anxiety in 2019. I was trying to work out how I could return to work (as an NHS nurse), arrange childcare for my son and still budget to pay rent and bills. My parents were already helping out financially, but both were now shielding, so we were more isolated than ever.

"At first I had no choice but to continue to go food shopping with my son in his buggy. As the significance of the virus became apparent and other lifelines to cheaper food (such as vouchers supplied for help with fresh fruit and vegetables) dwindled, it was hard to keep going out and remain calm.

"It was then that I started to limit the number of times we went to the shops, but this meant being creative with what we had in the cupboards – and a natural born cook I'm not! Knowing how vital providing a healthy and varied diet to my son at this stage of his life is only compounded the anxiety I felt about shopping and trying to plan meals. Not to mention the difficulty of entertaining a baby while trying to cook something healthy and edible all on a budget!

"I was then informed about Peckham Pantry doing deliveries and it was such a relief. They had already been such a lifeline – with the financial help of knowing I wouldn't run out of food as long as I could make it to the Pantry on a Wednesday.

"At first I felt that perhaps I should say no to the deliveries, so that someone who was unwell / physically unable to leave their home could have our share. I'm so glad that I didn't though! The contact with people dropping off the deliveries and variety in food it gave us became such an important part of our week. My son was craving contact with the outside world and would love waving at the people who delivered and then get so excited about unpacking the box. The treats (like Easter Eggs and cookies) were such lovely surprises and it was such a weight off my shoulders to know we'd be getting some fresh fruit and veg. This was especially true when we had to self-isolate for seven days!

"I have managed to arrange a nursery placement for my son and return to work during lockdown, with the timing of deliveries ending being just right for us. I would like to say a massive thank you for being our lifeline."

*Danni's story was kindly shared with us by the Evaluation team at Peckham Pantry. If you'd like to learn more about their evaluation, contact Linda Jackson at [Pantryresearch@gmail.com](mailto:Pantryresearch@gmail.com)*

# Volunteering: A member-run community

**“I have made new friends, learned new skills and my confidence has increased. I have gained valuable work experience. I really enjoy being a volunteer.”**

*Smethwick Pantry, Sandwell*

**“Volunteering allows me to feel more like my own person, and not just a wife or mother.”**

*Christ Church Pantry, Liverpool*

Your Local Pantries are member-run, led by volunteers who are often also Pantry members. This aspect of the Pantry model was important to 71% of members.

There are over 360 volunteers across the Pantry network. Volunteering can involve welcoming members as they arrive, serving refreshments, supporting members on the shop floor, managing the database, forming rotas, collecting and sorting food deliveries and tidying away at the end of a session. In several Pantries, a core team of volunteers make up a Pantry committee, shaping how the Pantry operates.

**116,000** hours  
per year contributed  
by **360** volunteers  
in the network

All volunteers receive regular training; with new volunteers undertaking bespoke training including food hygiene, allergy awareness, manual handling, Pantry management, customer service and Pantry online portal training.

Volunteers come from all walks of life, with a variety of motivations for volunteering. For some it is a chance to learn new skills, citing volunteering as a way to support their route into employment. For others, it is a chance to give back to their community and use their skills in new ways.

**“Being a volunteer has improved my job opportunities by showing organisational skills, working with people and communication.”**

*St George’s Pantry, Liverpool*

**“Being a volunteer gives me a bit of focus and allows me to give back to the Pantry some of my vast experience within retail.”**

*Penny Lane Pantry, Stockport*

**“I have learned new skills around budgeting and it’s done in a way that I’m not embarrassed to talk about it.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

Several volunteers identified how volunteering has increased their confidence and has been good for their mental wellbeing.

**“I feel a valued member of society, which increased my confidence.”**

*St Andrew’s Pantry, Liverpool*

**“My confidence has grown over the last year volunteering at Pantry, I’ve completed a food hygiene course too.”**

*Dusty Forge Pantry, Cardiff*

**“Volunteering helps me feel useful and I make new friends.”**

*Lighthouse Pantry, Middleton*

## Rob’s story

Rob has volunteered at St George’s Pantry in Everton since it opened a year ago, not long after he started coming to St George’s church on a Sunday morning. During the pandemic, Rob’s role has been to welcome members at the door (and encourage them to keep their distance). He is warm, always full of a kind word or a terrible joke!

Rob, who is signed off work, explains why being a volunteer is important to him:

“The Pantry was in the church that I was attending, and that was new to me as well, coming to church again, from years ago. And it seemed to fit in with exactly what I wanted: although I have a family, I wanted something to be a part of, just for me, on a more personal level you know. So, it come at the right time. When I started helping, I met a few friends and old neighbours, which was totally amazing because I never thought I’d see them again! You meet new people; and it really gives you a sense of belonging; and a sense of you’re actually doing something for someone else for a change rather than always wanting people to do something for you.

“I used to get angry a lot before I started coming to church, that’s why I came to church. But it’s actually brought me right down to live in reality, in the real world, because when you’re sitting in your house, and you’re just festering, and you’re just thinking about stupid things that you shouldn’t be thinking about. But this is, it really is a Godsend, whether Pantry wasn’t in the church, if it wasn’t in the church I’d still do it. I would have still volunteered to do it, but because it’s in the church it’s a double bonus.

“Working with the Pantry members is really good, it’s really good. I go home, come here with a smile on my face, even if I have to get up at 7 o’clock on a morning, and I go home, even if I’m tired from humping around tables, it’s great.”

# Your Local Pantry: Over to you

Want to start a Pantry in your area? Your Local Pantry Development Worker Gillian Oliver explains how you can join the Network.

Your Local Pantry is a worked plan with an undergirding philosophy to help low-income families avoid crisis, **saving them hundreds of pounds on their annual grocery bill.**

Because we work with environmental charity FareShare, **we are part of the war on food waste.**

Because we insist on chilled, frozen and seasonal food, **we are helping our members to health.**

Because the shop runs from a hand-held tablet in-store, **volunteers add to their skills and improve their employability.**

And, because Your Local Pantry is for the long term, you can **get to know your members and help them find other useful services.**

## A Pantry could have the same transformative impact where you are

It's relatively cheap to set up a Pantry if you have a venue, volunteers and a good supply of food. You can cover most of your operating costs from weekly membership fees.

Our social franchise is like 'a business in a box', designed to ease the process of setting up and running a Pantry. It includes:

### 'How to' help

- Pantry Handbook: A comprehensive operations manual giving step-by-step instructions to guide you and your volunteers through setting up and operating a Pantry
- Shop creation: Discounts on white goods and shop fittings
- Shop branding: Volunteer aprons and name badges
- Food safety: A cool bag and a fridge thermometer for each member
- Pantry visit: An opportunity to visit an existing Pantry, meet the team and see how it works

### Set up support

- Guidance from a specialist development team including help with site appraisals, contacts and launch event media
- Training: membership software and volunteer training

### Pantry management software run on hand-held tablet

A bespoke online management system supporting cash reconciliation, food hygiene monitoring and comprehensive reporting.

### The support of a national network

National website to showcase your Pantry and a place new members can apply  
[www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk](http://www.yourlocalpantry.co.uk)

Peer learning: Annual conference, weekly email and a chance to take part in piloting and evaluating new ideas

'How-to' documents and factsheets relating to day-to-day Pantry operations including our Excel business planner



## Contact us

If you are interested in finding out more, please contact Your Local Pantry at [info@yourlocalpantry.co.uk](mailto:info@yourlocalpantry.co.uk)  
**0161 872 9294**

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 28 Sandpiper Court,  
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# Your Local **PANTRY**

**“I have food in my cupboards and have a bit of money to pay my debts off. The Pantry is not just a place to get food, it is a place to meet friendly staff and make new friends”**

*Pantry at No. 5, Stockport*

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