

York and North Yorkshire Covid Recovery Insight Project

Food Insecurity Research

The efficacy of different food access models



Final Report April 2023

Executive Summary

1. Taxonomy of food access models

Over 50 types of food access models have been identified in York and North Yorkshire. Desk research has enabled a new taxonomy to be formed around 11 groupings, each explored in detail by this study. This enables any reader to have a definition of each model and their key characteristics alongside examples of practice in the UK.

2. The efficacy of food access models

A rapid evidence assessment considered over 1,400 sources of literature filtered down to 72 'strong' methodological studies enabling the researchers to consider the efficacy of the 11 models and present these in a form that allows any reader to better understand the outcomes typically associated with these models; whilst also shining a light on any enablers and inhibitors to those food access models. The study is not designed to compare each model or for investors to view them as competitors to one another, rather to reveal the potential for each model to produce a desired intended result more consistently.

3. Outcomes

Outcomes from the food access models were observed for individuals/households, communities, food aid/access providers/organisations/partnerships, the environment and the state. This study focuses on the benefits for individuals/households, food access models and communities and identifies outcomes across the domains of health, wellbeing (including for volunteers), improved household income, strengthening communities, strengthened local economy/investing in community as well as strengthened community resilience and social infrastructure. Providers have typically benefited in terms of their capacity and confidence to meet local need as well as work with others in emergency response.

4. Key messages and opportunities

The study identifies 5 key opportunities. This summary seeks to explain their rationale in a distilled fashion, whilst a dedicated website makes a suite of supporting resources available to readers in order to explore granular detail to inform their practice and local conversations.

1	The opportunity to invest in place-based collaborative food access models e.g., networks, partnerships, alliances, taskforces to improve co-ordination with options to position them in areas where disparities / food insecurity is greatest or at higher risk.
2	The opportunity to invest in / nurture mixed income models rooted in communities.
3	The opportunity to pilot cash-first approaches in York and North Yorkshire.
4	The opportunity to invest in / nurture 'more than food' models linked to wrap around support, advice, signposting and / or connection to other services and community assets.
5	The opportunity to invest in the convening power of food including 'food and education' (to grow, share, celebrate and encourage community enterprise, resilience and social capital).

The purpose of the Project

This research report forms part of a multi-strand insight project relating to 'poverty' that was commissioned jointly by North Yorkshire County Council and City of York Council between April 2022 and March 2023. It focuses on food access models and the outcomes associated with them.

Project ambitions

1. Understand what kind of food security models/provision is available in York and North Yorkshire.
2. Undertake desk research to understand the efficacy of different food models/provision and explore the outcomes/benefits they can deliver.
3. Use data, insight, and evidence to understand the scale of the food insecurity issue now and in future e.g., considering the impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.
4. Improve approaches to short-term action planning, longer-term strategy development, commissioning and grant deployment that could contribute to a reduction in food insecurity in York and North Yorkshire.

Associated ambitions

1. Start to understand how lived experience can increasingly be placed at the heart of longer-term strategy development and an improvement in systems with models/provision that have the characteristics of dignity and choice.
2. Engage with stakeholders through a mix of conversations, formal interviews, surveying (now and or in future) and events that can help identify what works well, what is missing in the landscape ('gaps') and what better could look like.
3. Identify practical resources and toolkits that are used elsewhere to save time or effort reinventing models/provision thought to derive the kind of benefits that the partners desire in York and North Yorkshire.

The purpose of this summary

This summary distils the key findings of the desk research that sought to develop a taxonomy of food access models and explore their efficacy. It addresses Project ambitions 1 and 2 with key messages designed to address ambition 4.

A detailed report containing all evidence and learning is available from the commissioning team (see contact details at the back of this paper) as are a range of user-friendly presentation slides and short reports for each of the 11 models that are included in the scope of this research (see 'Taxonomy')

The report has been designed primarily for anyone with a responsibility for developing food insecurity policy and / or investment linked to place-based financial and / or social inclusion. It may also benefit officers with responsibility for local welfare assistance scheme and / or national welfare support programmes (e.g., the Household Support Fund). It may be useful to food access providers wishing to contrast their own practice with that of others and the evidence that has been possible to collect about the outcomes typically associated with each model.

Definition

'Food insecurity is defined as not always having the economic, social, and physical resources to shop, cook, and eat in order to ensure a sufficient supply of nutritionally appropriate food'. (United Nations 2012)

What is household food insecurity? *It is a lack of the financial resources needed to ensure reliable access to food to meet dietary, nutritional, and social needs. It can be acute, transitory, or chronic, and ranges in severity from worry about not being able to secure enough food to going whole days without eating¹.*

Taxonomy

The desk research process to identify different food access models was complemented by a practical task of identifying 'real' provision across York and North Yorkshire. This led to over 50 typologies being identified, which have subsequently been grouped into 11 'families' as illustrated below. In the absence of an accepted inter/national framework of food access typologies or models but inspired by the COVID-19 food vulnerability research across the UK, we have developed the following groupings. In practice, some of these models overlap or combine into mixed models depending on the community context, need and drivers for its creation and / or maintenance.

Activities supporting food access: a suggested taxonomy

Free Food	Low-Cost community food retail	Cash-based approaches
Direct food provision	Community hubs, food hubs and clubs	Collaborative models
Other resources for food response	Tailored / targeted food aid provision	Wrap-around support
Food and education	Community food initiatives/ projects	

See listing on the next page for further explanation of what is included in each grouping.



Examples of types of food access activity in each Model

Free food

- Food banks
- Community fridges
- Community larders

Low-cost community food retail

- Social supermarkets
- Food pantries

Cash-based approaches

- Cash grants
- Financial inclusion / income maximisation activity
- Vouchers (for comparative purposes)

Direct food provision

- Food parcels
- Direct meal provision e.g., meals on wheels

Community Hubs, Food Hubs and Clubs

Collaborative models

- Partnerships
- Networks
- Taskforce
- Alliances

Resources for food response

- Funding (e.g., into VCSE sector)
- Food
- Human resources/capacity
- Other 'infrastructure' (equipment/transport)

Tailored / targeted food aid provision

- Aimed at specific population groups

Wrap-around support

- Money advice / debt counselling / other services
- Signposting

Food and Education

- Community kitchens
- Community food programmes or projects with a specific 'social making' motivation e.g., cooking, learning and sometimes then eating together
- Courses and demonstrations that are accessed at community hubs

Community food initiatives / projects

- Initiatives that run food activities as part of their wider work or whose core work is about food (multiple models)
- Projects about 'growing', 'enterprise', 'sharing' and or 'celebrating' food

Outcomes

A range of outcomes are typically associated with the food access models reviewed.



In the kitchen enthusiastic and skilled volunteers prepare for Waste not Wednesdays at Ripon Community House

Depending on how the food access model is oriented, a range of outcomes are possible for individuals using them or working in them across the domains of:

- **Health**
- **Wellbeing**
- **Improved household income**
- **Volunteer outcomes.**

Please see some more detailed examples overleaf.

Outcomes / Benefits of Food Security

- ↑ Improved physical health through healthy eating
- ↑ Improved mental health e.g., through reduced feelings of anxiety and better managing situations of 'stress, struggle and stretch'
- ↓ Reduction of risk factors associated with chronic diseases as a result of accessing healthy, nutritious food and diet behavioural change
- ↓ Contribution to prevention outcomes e.g. reduced admission to hospital, delayed need for care
- ↑ Improved food and nutrition security
- ↑ Access to address immediate short term need
- ↑ Alleviation of hunger
- ↑ Availability, access and stability of wide variety of healthy and nutritious food
- ↑ Enables choice of healthier food / improved diets / cook healthier at home
- ↑ Enables individuals to try new nutritious food not previously tried or afforded
- ↑ Improved sense of empowerment wherever choice is built into the model
- ↑ Food knowledge and literacy

Some mixed models claim to contribute to ↑ stability for members to improve their food security long-term

- ↑ Behavioural change e.g. ↑ increased intake of fruit and vegetables as an ↑ % of household budget and / or as a snack choice displacing less healthy options
- ↑ Changes in the way recipients buy, shop, and cook
- ↑ Changes in householders' food preparation patterns

- ↑ Valuable (employability / life) skills
- ↑ Confidence around food / cooking skills / food literacy
- ↑ Feelings of being needed, not needy (reciprocity through contribution)
- ↑ Improved sense of purpose, meaning, 'ownership', enfranchisement and 'doing good in a simple way', supporting instinct for mutual aid
- ↓ Reduced isolation and /or feelings of loneliness



Interventions for Individuals



- ↑ Improves feelings of self-worth
- ↓ Reduces feelings of stigma
- ↑ Improved feelings of social inclusion
- ↓ Reduces anxiety and stress to feed self / others
- ↑ Reduces financial worries improving mental health
- ↑ Improved sense of dignity
- ↑ Self-confidence
- ↑ Improved life skills
- ↑ Improved self-efficacy
- ↑ Sense of control
- ↑ Feelings of independence
- ↑ Safe spaces that encourage belonging

Some evaluations highlight benefits of some models for families / households not just individuals

- ↑ Financial savings used to settle debts, pay other bills or buy more quality food elsewhere
- ↑ Avoided spend through use of no / low cost / PAYF (pay as you feel) models
- ↑ Helps stretch household / family budgets further
- ↑ Improved financial wellbeing
- ↑ Food resilience e.g., avoided use of food banks
- ↑ Enables people to feed their families and have money left over from their food budget
- ↑ Increase your/household/family food spending budget

Outcomes / Benefits of Food Security

The research also identifies models that can support or accelerate outcomes for communities across these domains:

↑ A reliable / stable response in times of crisis

Where additional support and/or signposting is offered to services or community-based activity by the model additional direct and indirect benefits can accrue e.g.,

↑ Improved skills and personal development through training such as cookery classes / demonstrations / home budgeting / interview skills / community leadership training / business courses helping you / families to learn how to cook simple and nutritious meals with confidence / within a budget

↑ Connection to other social and service providers - debt service recovery groups, local welfare support scheme, pastoral, and spiritual support; benefits and legal advice, help for self / families deal with the root causes of food insecurity

↑ Members who participate in a wider community hub model's activities are connected to other support organisations in the communities thereby providing them with opportunity to 'build back their life'

↑ Co-ordination / local support and involvement

↑ Members buying the food packages in their community spaces often provides an informal opportunity for them to engage with other support services that they wouldn't necessarily have done before, in turn supporting them to rebuild their resilience

Depending on the nature of the individual's journey before or after accessing the model:

↑ Improved employability

↑ Access to education

↑ Opportunity to address food insecurity longer term through person-centred support

**Connecting
with community
services /
strengthening
communities**

Some food models can contribute to place-based self-organising, strengthened referral pathways for people navigating different 'systems' as well as encourage local co-ordination of person-centred support. 'Communities within a community' can be built and the involvement of experts by experience is thought to significantly enhance outcomes.

Community Interventions for Communities

Strengthening local economy and investing in community

- ↑ Reinvestment of income (e.g., membership fees) to purchase stock from local firms where possible (n.b., this is a hallmark of community wealth building)
- ↑ Some models disproportionately invest in local people who have struggled to access the labour market for whatever reason
- ↑ Some multi-faceted models e.g., community food hubs can often emerge from opportunities to regenerate a space through a community asset transfer
- ↑ Place based voucher schemes can be redeemed at local (fruit/vegetables/other) markets / stalls increasing income for participating stalls, co-operatives and FV producers and increase spending in local markets

Community resilience and social infrastructure

- ↑ More connected to your local community e.g. membership models
- ↑ Enables building of social networks, socialising, meeting new friends
- ↑ Improves feelings of value and sometimes, enjoyment
- ↑ Catalyst for community / sharing / developing new perspectives
- ↑ Increased sense of community and enfranchisement
- ↑ Where partnership models are established there is the potential to deliver more co-ordinated responses to deliver greater impact through needs identification, resource deployment and sharing information
- ↑ Where models use lived experience to inform the local solutions the benefits to all involved are thought to be more effective and enduring
- ↑ Working with community partners to establish community / food hubs creates community resilience, a sense of ownership / enfranchisement and social infrastructure for members/community
- ↑ Social cohesion / 'build a community within a community'

Individuals

Specific models claim to contribute to prevention outcomes such as reduced admission to hospital, the delayed need for care, reduced hospital stays, reduced risk of hospital admission, suicide. Some encourage independence and, when evaluated at an aggregate level, support the reduction in health inequalities and disparities.

Most models – whether free or contributory (paid for) - seek to address the immediate hunger needs of people needing to access them, driven by a desire to alleviate hardship and providing an emergency food / essentials safety net. They are preventing an escalation of negative consequences for people who are in a situation of stretch, stress, struggle, strain, worry and in some cases, destitution.

These models, however, may not have a focus on the quality or nutritional value of the food being offered and thus desirable health benefits will be more limited than those models which are able to source and afford fresh fruit and vegetables. Choice of food and the extent to which therefore anyone using them can feel empowered differs significantly between the models. There is a strong contingent and growing evidence base for cash-first approaches being the most dignified (emergency response) model for addressing food insecurity as it means putting cash directly into people's pockets without condition and enabling them to choose how best to use that money to meet their needs in life.

As each model is more affordable than a retail supermarket offer each one has the potential to improve household income, or at least enable anyone using them to make their income stretch further which might assist in them needing to pay for other bills, debts or access more quality food elsewhere.

Voucher models can be designed in such a way that they can give rise to local economic benefits, if for example, a condition of their use is on purchasing food from local vendors, market traders or co-operatives. This offers some elements of choice for the individual whilst also encouraging healthier shopping, cooking and eating habits. Most models rely on volunteers and there is evidence of benefits for these individuals, the skills they develop and sense of purpose and enfranchisement. In the 'best' models there is reciprocity where it is hard to distinguish who is the volunteer and who is the beneficiary.

Models that are 'more than food' can catalyse additional and potentially longer lasting outcomes such as those that offer preventative or wrap around support services, advice, guidance, debt counselling and education where an individual is assisted to address the root causes of their insecurity.

Finally, models that encourage people to eat or cook together, to grow, share and celebrate food in the place they live give rise to additional commensural benefits that encourage a sense of belonging and inclusion which impact individual wellbeing effects.

The 'mixed model' however is perhaps the one that has greatest potential and long-term viability, rooted in a community, run or managed by that community and offering the potential for paid, affordable, PAYF (Pay As You Feel) and free options calibrated to meet local needs. An example might be a community hub, offering a paid for community café, a social supermarket and wrap around services facilitated by the hub space used by multiple agencies and voluntary and community organisations.

Communities

Models that comprise an additional support / signposting element, services, training, classes, demonstration or community-based activity provide multiple benefits around skills and personal development within the locality. Connection can be made between the individual(s) using the food access model and other social and service providers, debt service recovery groups, local welfare support schemes, pastoral, legal and spiritual support for families or households. These models can provide a 'way-in' to other services and ultimately pathways to improved employability, access to education and the opportunity to address food insecurity longer term through person centred support.

Where local models 'buy' food locally, or where they charge membership fees there is a local investment gain, and in some models do provide opportunities for local people who have struggled to access the labour market for some time. The research found examples of community (food) hubs emerging from wider opportunities for community asset transfer and ownership in neighbourhoods. Food provided an 'anchor' proposition for that community and was able to build out from that common ingredient.

Some of the food access models operate on a membership basis and these can enable the building of social networks and the building of a community within a community. Finally, collaborative models e.g., a local (food) partnership or network can significantly improve levels of local co-ordination, understanding of community need and assets giving rise to better resource deployment, increased community resilience by learning and acting together and rooting lived experience within the heart of decision-making.

Funding for voluntary and community sector food access and response

Investment in the voluntary community and social enterprise sector to support emergency food response has derived a range of outcomes since 2020 some of which can have effects beyond the period of crisis in local communities

Outcomes for organisations in receipt of Defra / North Yorkshire County Council food related funding during the pandemic



1 Increased profile in the community



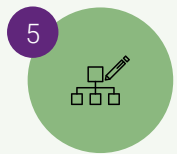
2 Increased capacity and resource



3 Reinforced VCSE status as a locally trusted organisation



4 Increased know-how



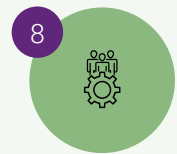
5 Confidence



6 VCSEs have realised their wealth of knowledge



7 Financial benefits



8 Stronger partnership working

Efficacy

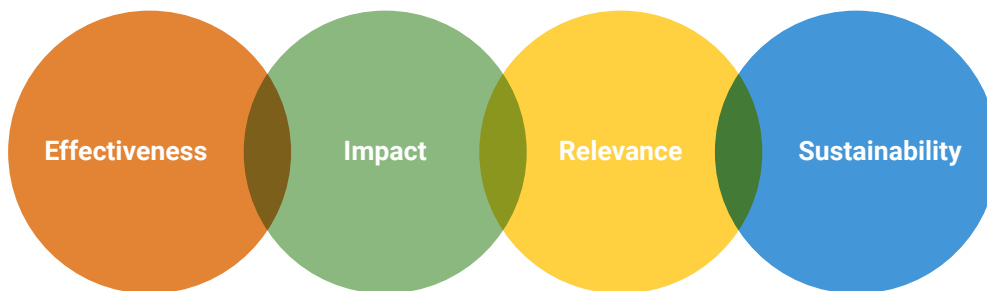
'The ability to produce a desired or intended result.'

Prior to this research there has not been a definitive study classifying the different food access models and typologies identified; nor a systematic review that reveals their efficacy. This research goes some way towards filling this gap in the hope that people with lived experience of food insecurity and commissioners and policy makers can come together with confidence to design a food security landscape / system that produces desired outcomes in York and North Yorkshire.

In the full report each of the 11 models have been reviewed by assessing available evidence / impact studies, identifying learning lessons about how to make the model 'successful', shining a light on examples of practice and then posing a number of questions for policy makers and food access providers to inform and guide future decision making processes.

It is important to note that:

- This study does not seek to compare one model against the other like a competition, rather help build an understanding of each model, the outcomes typically associated or possible to derive from that model and the different enablers or inhibitors to be mindful of.
- The study encourages you to consider whether your decisions have a longer-term unintended effect too e.g., whilst ensuring the most vulnerable in society are prioritised do the emergency responses build dependency rather than resilience; and do they adequately reach those most in need or do issues relating to stigma limit their efficacy?
- The desire to apply a standard 'assessment' of efficacy across the models has not been possible owing to the variability, inconsistency and limited quality of studies that explore this topic. In an ideal scenario, investors, food aid providers might, with lived experience and local partnerships, consider a framework for investing in food models that explore these dimensions of efficacy³



- **Effectiveness** – How effective is the model?
- **Impact** – What positive and negative impact do activities have on stakeholders / members, families and volunteers?
- **Relevance** – Are activities relevant to the context and needs of communities?
- **Sustainability / Viability** – To what extent do activities have long-lasting and wider impact?

What is clear is that different models play an important role in helping individuals and / or families experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity. The literature reviewed finds a host of outcomes are possible from the different food access typologies, for individuals /households, communities, the environment, the partners/providers of each model and the state (some of which have just been described). It is less evident

whether one model delivers 'more' or 'better' outcomes than others, but the study concludes the wider potential of '**mixed income**' community-based / led food access models and '**more than food**' models which provide access to wrap around support and services – the latter, because they offer opportunities for addressing the root causes of food / insecurity.

The literature reviewed has been stronger in terms of describing:

- Benefits for individuals/households – particularly the health and wellbeing benefits.
- Benefits for the environment (in terms of food waste avoided/food surplus redistributed).
- Benefits for two collaborative models – food partnerships and food poverty alliances.

The literature (and evidence) is becoming stronger, but still emergent in describing:

- Benefits for communities.
- Benefits for partners / providers of each model.

The literature is weaker in terms of:

- Providing a definitive assessment of the efficacy of individual or combination 'more than food' models e.g., food + welfare / advice / support / wider community activity.
- Providing assessments of the long-term impact of different models i.e. the extent to which an individual becomes sustainably food secure (one measure tracked by some but not all models was the reduced use of food banks over time)
- Providing an assessment of the preventative outcomes of food access models.

Literature about models that are successfully sustainable, enterprising or viable in communities rather than dependent on (solely) grant income are referred to as 'mixed income models' and there are some promising examples found in the main report.

Literature about lived experience of food insecurity is available, particularly linked to people's experience during COVID-19, however, there are no authoritative studies that identify personal journeys and approaches that help develop a greater understanding of how individuals can successfully progress from a position of severe to moderate insecurity to mild insecurity to security. This may be a gap that academic leads in this field could seek to fill in future.

The Steering Group for this Project has meantime commissioned some participatory research with the LIFE Group in York to explore this and other themes. 'Efficacy' viewed from the perspective of lived experience is an important ingredient to embed in future policy making or decisions about how to make any local 'food security' system better, indeed should have implications for the way in which decisions about local welfare assistance and wider national support could be deployed to best effect. Food insecurity after all is a symptom of wider insecurity and that needs addressing at its root if we are to improve on the situation where **in May 2022 an estimated 15.5% of households could be food insecure – equivalent to 43,000 households in North Yorkshire and 7,500 households in York.**

Key Messages & Opportunities

Whilst national campaigns to 'end food banks' and 'end emergency food aid' are absolutely the right pursuit, this will likely take a very long time and rely on nationally owned levers that are in the gift of central government to pull. In the meantime, this research demonstrates that there are meaningful benefits derived from food access models and that local levers can be used to optimise their efficacy. There is a great opportunity to build a greater, shared understanding of the 'best' aspects of these models and wherever possible encourage joint working. Information sharing events in 2023 could support this ambition using the resources from this Project and the wider knowledge and experiences of those involved in food access across York and North Yorkshire.

The study's author also believes that there are some specific opportunities arising from this research that could improve the conditions for improving the efficacy of existing food access models, adapting them to derive intended results and / or developing them in a co-ordinated way whilst linked to a wider long-term ambition for a more food secure York and North Yorkshire.

Opportunity 1: Place-based collaborative models

Place-based approaches to investment in food access models might be improved through the development and / or nurturing of collaborative models such as partnerships, networks, taskforces or alliances in more parts of York and North Yorkshire working together in a planned way using the '**Food Ladders**' blueprint. The reasons for highlighting this opportunity include:

- Evidence that collaborative models accelerate local co-ordination of food security initiative, helping to join up different food models despite their different drivers and purpose, whilst also providing a forum for lived experience and multiple sectors to join their resources and endeavour in a place-based context.
- Whilst York has a variety of collaborative models (e.g. Good Place Network and previously the York Food Poverty Alliance which morphed into the York Food Justice Alliance), North Yorkshire has only a small number of place-based (food) networks or partnerships (in Craven, Whitby, Ryedale and Selby) suggesting a deficit in this kind of model; and an inconsistency in approach which could easily be improved and amplified – particularly in the context of new, proposed Community Networks as part of local government reorganisation in 2023.
- Evaluations of collaborative models suggest a range of benefits including the agreement of 'success measures' that can be tracked and the direct involvement of lived experience to guide and inform policy and action planning.
- Food Ladders is an approach that has caught the imagination of the Project Steering Group and with appropriate support to 'translate' it into a practical set of approaches that could be implemented in different places, provides a balanced and pragmatic framework for catering for the continuing crisis need to 'catch' people at a time of significant financial duress, whilst also developing a foodscape that can build capacity for those struggling to afford and / or access good food (but who are not in crisis), as well as the pursuit of self-organised community change.

The conditions for a place-based collaborative model may need to be assessed before any significant resource is allocated, however, we can learn from the ones that have already formed, have navigated the pandemic and are setting their goals for the future. In terms of making an argument for any targeted, new collaborative model, one approach might be to make a presumption that disproportionate investment ought

to be located in those areas where there is the highest prevalence of or risk of food insecurity and associated health disparities. A data dashboard being developed as part of this Project could assist, and more specifically the new **Priority Places for Food Index⁶** could assist with such targeting – not only of where best to establish a ‘partnership,’ but also where other specific food models could be tailored or targeted.

Opportunity 2: Mixed income food models rooted in communities

‘A decent network of community food spaces in a place.’

Mixed income food access models are more likely to be viable and can iterate around a community’s dynamic needs, not solely focused on emergency response but also appealing to those seeking affordable models and/or social connection (e.g., at community hubs). Examples of mixed income models might be a community hub with a café and social supermarket or a community store/shop with an integrated community kitchen and community café. The reasons for highlighting this opportunity include:

- Evidence that mixed income models deliver a wide set of positive outcomes for individuals, volunteers and staff and wider community over time, whilst not depending on repeat public sector funding to prop up the operations.
- Evidence that the enterprising aspect of these models not only improves their longer-term viability (to meet local community needs), but also in of itself encourages local enfranchisement and ‘ownership’ – an emotional connection to some social infrastructure that encourages a sense of belonging and higher levels of reciprocity where everyone contributes something – if not money, they can contribute, time and skills and feel needed not needy.
- The community hub model is well established in York with food a common aspect of each one despite their varied ownership and infrastructure. In North Yorkshire it is less obvious if and whether these mixed income models exist and persist. Certainly, across the geography there were only a few low cost community retail models (such as social supermarkets) whereas these are found to exist around the UK and investment appears to be attractive to public health partners who can see the potential nutritional benefits of such models. At the same time, paying money for food – albeit at a much lower rate than supermarkets – is reported to improve a sense of dignity, choice and empowerment this mixed models can potentially deliver social, health, wellbeing and local community wealth benefits if organised with that multi-faceted intent.

Opportunity 3: Cash-first approaches

Cash-first approaches offer a different type of emergency response option to complement – or some would argue, displace - the existing investment approach seen in York and North Yorkshire. These approaches put money directly into people’s pockets at a time they need it most and without conditions. However, even ‘cash-first’ approaches alone cannot address food insecurity. Wider support, skills and connection is required for any individual to move from their situation sustainably. This issue is about ‘more than money,’ particularly true in highly rural areas where access is a significant barrier to food security . The reasons for highlighting this opportunity include:

- The political imperative to support the most vulnerable in our society and the need to do more around financial and social inclusion wherein food insecurity forms just one part of that wider political domain and governance.

- The growing evidence (particularly in Scotland as a result of policy there) that cash-first approaches can support individuals in a more dignified fashion, without stigma, that alternative models cannot match, and that when aligned to supportive advice and guidance creates the time and headspace for individuals to more likely access that support and address the root causes of their insecurity.
- Evidence and advocacy, particularly from the Trussell Trust for this model means that this Project can benefit from their experience of piloting and evaluating a cash-first approach in Leeds and explore the opportunity for a similar pilot in York and North Yorkshire, most likely in a willing locality where there is already a pre-existing collaborative model and / or where the IFAN cash-first leaflet approach has already been tested (e.g. food partnership or food alliance) so that different approaches could be run ideally in combination to assess their different effects.
- York and North Yorkshire have local welfare assistance schemes as well as being responsible for the deployment of the Household Support Fund. There is opportunity to use the evidence in this study and comparative UK practice to explore their flexibilities for cash-first approaches alongside an active advice sector and income maximisation services and support.

Opportunity 4: More than food models

'More than food' models' are those as the name suggests that offer something beyond the transaction of the food itself. They might include wrap-around support and advice, with access to other services either on-site or signposted accordingly into communities and other settings.

Debt Advice	Employment support	Digital Training	Benefits Advice	Financial education
Counselling / Emotional Help	Signposting	Mental Health First Aid	Income maximisation	Job seeking advice
Befriending	Health and wellbeing support	Family support	Housing advice	Advocacy
Cooking classes	Addiction support	Life skills support	Community gardening	Routes to/ volunteering
Recovery groups	Local welfare support scheme	Pastoral / spiritual support	Legal advice	Practical services

These models are more likely to help an individual or household address the root causes of their food insecurity because the food is just the symptom of wider insecurity, hardship and / or poverty. Models will ideally have access to attractive community services and experiences such as social making and social eating that can support ongoing health and wellbeing beyond emergency. The reasons for highlighting this opportunity include:

- Evidence that many food models already offer signposting and / or other services that are variously described as person-centred can support an individual at a time of crisis and, with appropriately skilled volunteers and multi-agency professionals,



reach, understand and support them to explore the things that are required to improve their economic and social situation.

- The interest in how best to configure advice, support and guidance around food models by stakeholders that have been engaged in this research study, and different views about what works best – professionally qualified advisers and / or volunteers trained in motivational interviewing and other core skills to confidently engage in conversations with people using food access models. The absence of a wrap-around offer seems to limit the potential efficacy of any food model so ensuring this is built in to a place-based ‘system’ or foodscape would seem highly beneficial.
- A need for greater evidence as to whether and how this kind of ‘beyond food model’ allied to an integrated financial inclusion approach actually supports individuals from being severely to moderately insecure to secure over time, and to understand the resource requirements to typically achieve such an outcome.

Opportunity 5: Invest in the convening power of food

Beyond the notion of food as fuel, or food as an essential resource needed at a time of crisis and emergency, food has the power to convene and include and encourage connection – through growing, enterprise, sharing and celebration. Models that explore this potential can derive benefits that extend beyond an individual’s health and wellbeing and offer additional benefits to communities within a community. They may manifest as community food projects or initiatives, luncheon clubs, suppers, co-operatives or intentional models that combine ‘food and education’ (such as community kitchens, cooking classes or courses and demonstrations at community hubs). They look different, demand different levels and intensities of resource and energy but all have the ability to produce commensal benefits. The reasons for highlighting this opportunity include:

- Strong evidence from evaluations of food and education models that individuals experience short-, medium- and longer-term benefits from participation (leading to better life chances and outcomes linked to learning and employment).
- Growing evidence about the efficacy of community food initiatives and the co-production opportunities afforded by community food projects¹⁰.
- The potential for these kinds of model to encourage community resilience and strengthen social ties, offering a mechanism for contributing to places deemed to have low social capital.

Conclusions

This research is by no means a definitive systematic review of all food access models and their efficacy as that would require significant and combined academic resourcing and rigour beyond the scope of this commission. However, it does offer a taxonomy, a common language for the various models which might encourage greater understanding of their attributes and associated outcomes. It has also started to build a set of practical resources that can hopefully support policy makers, commissioners, investors, local welfare assistance scheme managers, food aid / access providers, sub-regional, local or thematic partnerships/networks and other interested system partners.

- Public health partners could explore the evidence associated with, and case for investment in, food and education (e.g., community kitchens, cooking classes), voucher and targeted models.
- Children, young people and families service partners are encouraged to consider the evidence relating to targeted provision.
- Adult social care service partners are encouraged to explore the direct provision models (e.g. meals on wheels evidence).
- Voluntary and community sector partners are encouraged to consider which part of the 'Food Ladders' blueprint they support or aspire to support in future alongside other food access models in their place and explore the many examples of practice to optimise their activities.
- Other investors such as the National Lottery and Foundations with an interest in addressing poverty or specifically food insecurity as a symptom of that more entrenched issue are encouraged to collaborate and support place-based investment approaches, especially helping create the conditions for collaborative, mixed income and 'more than food' models that have a greater chance of enduring impact and efficacy over the longer-term.
- The advice sector is encouraged to share its best practice from pilots happening across the UK linked to financial inclusion and to build up resources and approaches that can be generously shared and distributed across local foodscape systems.

More generally all readers and food access models are encouraged to consider how best to embed the **dignity in practice principles** in their approach¹¹ and commit to learning together through any opportunities to attend events that should emerge as a consequence of this Project – whether relating to wider cost of living impacts, the work of the new Core Food Partnership (North Yorkshire), the ongoing work of the Financial Inclusion Group (in York) and / or specific workstreams being led by Public Health or other children young people or adult services.

In terms of finding a home for this food insecurity focused study and the wider Project, the best positioning would appear to be at a unitary authority level linked to financial and social inclusion; whilst making a useful contribution to wider Food Partnership / System structures.

Finally, and most important of all, **lived experience** should be at the heart of any revised policy around food insecurity, indeed any investment options appraised in future. Through a greater understanding of people's experiences, needs, hopes and strengths the value of this work can be more authentic, pragmatic and likely to succeed – if the measure of success is an incrementally more food secure York and North Yorkshire by 2030.



Practical resources

A set of resources have been produced as part of this research study to enable you to explore each model in more detail should you be interested to learn in that way.

Please visit this site:

<https://www.skyblue.org.uk/foodinsecurity>

The author would particularly encourage anyone reading this summary to download the **'50 questions'** that are designed to encourage conversations about what to think about before investing in food access models either for the first time or to extend what already exists – a sort of **checklist** that has usefully evolved during the process that initial recipients have suggested are very useful to their practice.

<https://www.skyblue.org.uk/foodinsecurity/questions-arising>

Further resources may be added in 2023 including the much-anticipated LIFE Group's lived experience research report and links to the emerging data dashboard that complements this work.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to or read this summary. We sincerely hope it can support your work and further discussion about the best ways to address food insecurity in York and North Yorkshire.

Further information



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End Notes:

- 1 What is household food insecurity? | ENUF
- 2 Local Responses to household food insecurity across the UK during COVID-19 (September 2020-September 2021), Katy Gordon, Hannah Lambie-Mumford, Simon Shaw and Rachel Loopstra extracted from the Lewisham Homes' Community Food Stores Impact Evaluation 2022, evaluation matrix
- 4 Individuals (and their household) primarily accessing free / PAYF / low cost food; but also, individuals in their role as volunteers / members / supporters of a (food) model.
- 5 Using 'Food Ladders' to create household and community resilience | Sustainable Food Places Priority Places (priority-places-explorer.azurewebsites.net)
- 7 Consider the United Nations 4 Pillars of Food Insecurity: What is Food Security? There are Four Dimensions (worldbank.org)
- 8 Cash First Referral Leaflets (worryingaboutmoney.co.uk)
- 9 For example: A snapshot of Covid-19, food insecurity and community food initiatives (communityfoodandhealth.org.uk)
- 10 How to set up food projects in your community | Eden Project Communities
- 11 Dignity Project: Nourish Scotland & the Poverty Truth Commission

Disclaimer: Information is presented in good faith and thought to be accurate at time of publication (April 2023), however the author cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions.



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