

Food Insecurity & Resilience in Communities

What's changing since September 2023? What could make a difference?

Respondents are driven by diverse and heartfelt motivations to provide food to their communities. Their goals include ensuring access to nutritious food for healthy and fulfilling lives, enhancing community capabilities, reducing waste, and promoting sustainability. They aim to create meaningful change by collaborating with knowledgeable individuals and platforms that influence attitudes and legislation, emphasising dignity, choice, and well-being. Motivations vary, with some inspired by faith to care for others, while others find purpose in helping their communities and staying physically and mentally fit. A key focus is providing emergency food provision, but there is a strong ambition to reduce the need for these services through partnerships with other agencies.

Out of the 25 complete responses to the survey, 14 (58%) had attended the York and North Yorkshire Food Summit in September 2023. Among these respondents, 14 identified as community food providers, including foodbanks (5), community cafés/shops (2), community fridges/pantries (2), FoodShare programmes (2), and organisations that offer education, advice, guidance, or signposting (3).



Figure 1: Word cloud based on 18 responses to the question 'What sort of community food provision - activities, or experiences - do you offer that help address food insecurity in York or North Yorkshire?'

Ten respondents provide information, advice, guidance, or other support services, and five identified as investors or grant makers supporting people, places, communities, and systems. Thirteen respondents are based in North Yorkshire, eight in York, and three have a broader reach than North Yorkshire / York.

Sixteen respondents expressed a desire to increase their capacity to offer advice, fifteen for guidance, and fourteen for information/signposting at community food provisions. Fourteen are interested in exploring 'More than food' activities and approaches, and the same number are keen on developing a 'place-based network' to address local food insecurity. Twelve are interested to invest in cash/income-first approaches for emergency response.

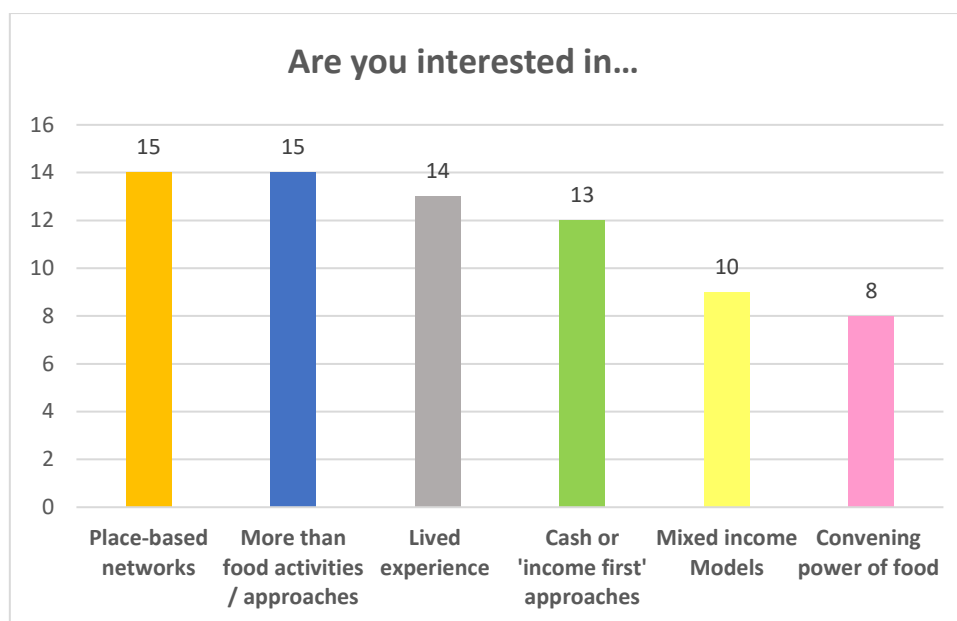


Figure 2: Based on 23 responses.

When asked, 15 respondents expressed interest in exploring the potential for starting, developing, or investing in a place-based network to address local food insecurity. Another 15 were interested in exploring 'more than food' activities, approaches, or investments for the future. Fourteen respondents wanted to initiate or improve collaboration with individuals with lived experience to shape community food provision and its associated benefits. Thirteen were keen to explore cash or income-first approaches as part of emergency response strategies. Ten respondents were interested in investigating best practices and mixed income models for the long-term viability of community food provision. Lastly, eight were eager to find new ways to leverage the power of food to bring together community members, including those who currently do not participate or engage.

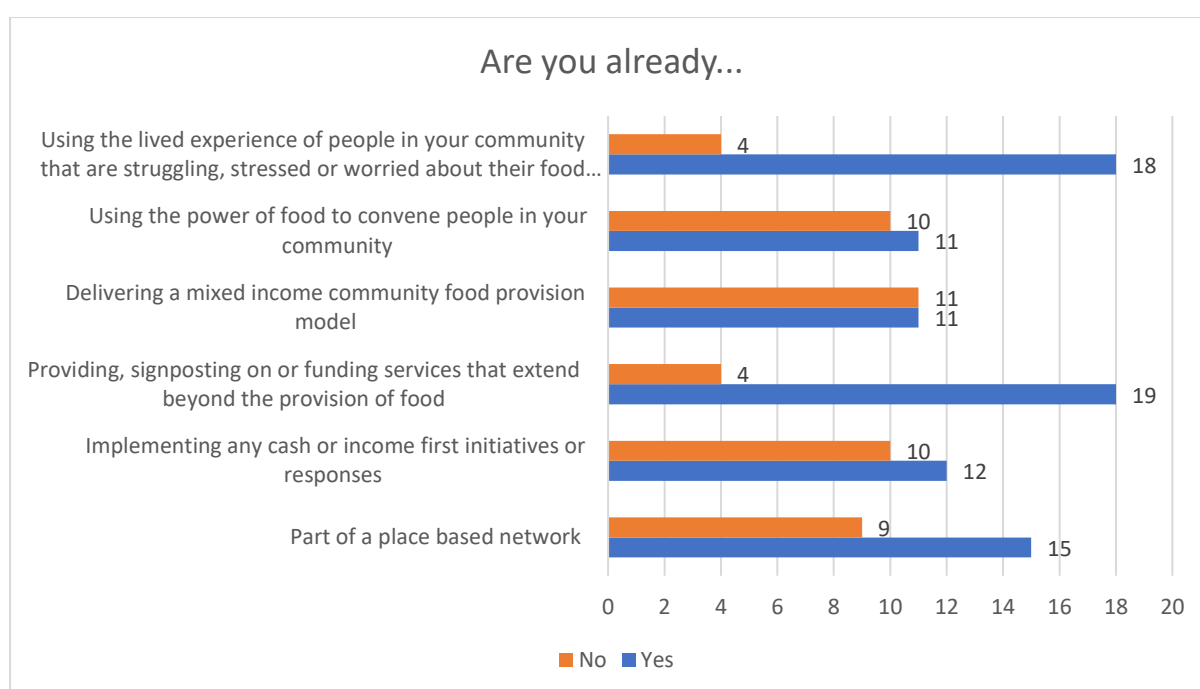


Figure 3: Based on 22 responses.

Twelve respondents mentioned already implementing cash or income-first initiatives, but only one explained that their organisation offered discretionary amounts of money to help customers deal with immediate financial issues. The rest explained the use of shopping vouchers, applying for grants, and providing low-cost food, sharing leaflets such as the 'Worried about Money' flyer, and signposting which did not highlight real cash/income-first support.

Nineteen respondents already provide, signpost, or fund services that extend beyond the provision of food to support residents in tackling the root causes of their food insecurity, such as information, advice, signposting, and guidance to other services (welfare, benefits, housing, debt, employment, and others).



Figure 4: 'More than food' activities delivered by providers 'word cloud' based on 15 responses.

What would make the biggest difference in addressing food insecurity and supporting people to be healthier, feel they belong, and become more resilient?

Suggestions included better education on nutrition and budgeting, more cooking classes and shared meal settings, and an improved social security system with benefits that cover living costs without delays. They also emphasised the need for more and longer-term grant funding, support for purchasing and storing food, and better connectivity among VCSE groups, statutory services, and transport to make support more accessible for families. Improved policies, recruitment for funded advice sectors, coordinator roles, and shared spaces for food distribution were also highlighted.

Thirteen individuals expressed interest in working with people with lived experience to shape community food provision, nine in exploring good practices and mixed-income models of food provision, and eight in using the power of food to bring people together. However, they identified barriers such as the need for quality training, staff and volunteer capacity, time, space, funding, community insight, consultancy, and engagement.

What kind of funding is necessary?

- Longer term funding
- Funding for a local co-ordinator
- A well-funded and community-based advice sector
- Funding to develop local food strategies.
- Funding to boost capacity; staff, someone to take this forward and implement.
- Funding for; a co-ordinator role and investment in advice sector
- Seed funding
- Funding for specialist staff training
- Vouchers for families that cannot afford baby milk or infant formula.

Eighteen individuals said 'yes' when asked if they already use the lived experience of people in their community that are struggling, stressed, or worried about their food security to shape and improve their provision, services, activities, experiences, and investment. Responses shed light on various strategies employed to enhance accessibility to food provision and promote inclusivity within community support systems. These strategies include:

- Engaging with surveys, volunteer bases, and findings from initiatives like the Poverty Truth Commission to ensure the inclusivity and effectiveness of services.
- Incorporating input from stakeholders into project design and service operations, including feedback from customers and volunteers with lived experience of food poverty.
- Utilising regular feedback from community members using food provision services to inform future developments and improvements.
- Actively recruiting staff and volunteers with lived experience to better understand and address the needs of those accessing support.
- Implementing outreach sessions in local primary schools to reach families who may find accessing services intimidating, addressing perceived stigma and barriers to access.
- Collaborating with other services, such as the Healthy Child Service, to identify and support individuals struggling with food insecurity, aiming to reduce reliance on food provision services through holistic support.

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- Building relationships with course attendees, offering support beyond just food provision, and fostering a sense of community and understanding.

Eleven respondents felt they already have a 'mixed income' community food provision model. Models mainly focused on 'pay as you feel' set ups:

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- Providing free food to those in need and also operating a hub with a "pay what you can" model for refreshments.
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- "Pay as you feel" cafes and community meals, which are partially funded by foodbanks and churches, with additional income from a standard paid cafe.
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- A 'Vinted' page to sell high-quality donated items alongside food and drinks in their community cafe.
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- Income through open days and tourist visits, supplemented by "pay as you feel" contributions.

Having multiple funders from different sectors gives organisations a degree of independence and security. Some organisations aim to be self-sufficient and seek funding primarily for additional projects rather than operational costs. They aspire to use profits from "pay as you feel" cafes to subsidise community groceries, although this has not yet been achieved. Grocery members from one organisation do contribute a small amount towards their shopping.

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- 14 respondents found the new Food Ladders Toolkit appealing to help communities move from crisis to resilience.
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- 21 are interested in attending future community practice events with investors/funders focused on food insecurity.
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- 19 were interested in development grants/support or access to resources aimed at building the skills and confidence of volunteers in community food provisions so they can provide guidance and signposting for people who may welcome it.
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- 19 are keen to collaborate on collective bids or proposals for funding to achieve currently unattainable goals.

Over the past six months, respondents observed several improvements, including better partnership working between food providers and cross-sector partners such as Local Authorities and VCSE food provisions. Additional payments from schemes like HSF and Cost of Living have reduced the need for food provisions for some people, as supported bills alleviated the demand on community providers. Anecdotal benefits included individuals feeling more positive, experiencing less stigma when asking for support, and showing improvements in skin, hair, and overall health. Additionally, better access to fresh food and extended, flexible opening hours have better met the needs of families and individuals.

However, during the same six-month period, respondents noted increased demand that currently outweighs supply. Short-term crises have escalated into long-term poverty, requiring more intensive support to help individuals recover. Donations have significantly decreased in some areas, and there is growing uncertainty regarding funding, the changing landscape, and the potential impacts of the upcoming general election.

Some solutions, or ideas what would be needed to implement some of the food models and recommendations offered by the respondents included:

- A co-ordinated approach in localities

- Research (how to remove barriers and stigma) / consultancy (why this matters and how to garner support) and case studies to share
- Local network meetings / develop a formal network including all food providers and community fridges.
- Better defined criteria, sensitive and careful delivery, simplified but robust means tested mechanisms for delivery,
- Increased capacity
- Training (specialist training for staff)
- Dedicated staff resource to take this on / forward (within a job role description)
- Funding (longer-term, for staff, provision, training)
- Time
- Physical space
- Join up of knowledge, insights, combining resources (for example linking schools in the area to help find young families and children struggling financially)
- Improved collaboration between existing provision and reducing competition
- Investment in the advice sector
- Building trust with clients
- Voucher restrictions - for example, not including alcohol on a shopping voucher, or having age restrictions on items through the voucher.
- Targeted delivery of emergency support.

Appendix A: Respondents

Name:	Name of organisation / group:
Alison Grainger	Hambleton Foodshare
Andy Studdart	Ryedale Food-Aid
Fiona McCulloch	Citizens 'Advice York
Max May	North Yorkshire Together
Adam Raffell	York Foodbank
Carol Shreeve	North Yorkshire Citizens Advice and Law centre
Maddy Power	University of York
Carol Taylor	Age UK North Craven
Laura Chalmers	Trussell Trust
Amanda Nicholson	Haxby Memorial Hall
Mora Scaife	City Of York Council
Lindsey Barker	Salvation Army Scarborough
Susan Wood	City Of York Council
Liz and Pam	Hambleton Community Action
Astrid Hanlon	LIFE Group
Natalie McPhillips	City of York Council
Jules Greenslade	Upper Dales Community Partnership Ltd
Emma Jennings	Skipton Food Bank
Jo Laking	The Rainbow Centre
Megan Blake	University of Sheffield
Michelle Hayes	Resurrected Bites
Neil Bradbury	Age UK North Yorkshire
Mike Calvert	Red Tower CIC
Gemma Marshall	North Yorkshire Council
Phil Truby	City of York Council

Figure 5: Roles of each individual are available.