

Food Provision across Selby, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster

The Place

This article describes the range of food support on offer in Selby, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster considering the rationale and evolution of the various models. Census 2021 data shows the respective populations of Selby town, Sherburn in Elmet and Tadcaster parishes being 17,193, 8,568 and 5,910 respectively. Surrounding areas are generally rural with people living in villages and some very small hamlets. In November 2024, the percentage of households in receipt of Universal Credit were 26.06% in Selby, 14.63% in Sherburn in Elmet and 11.05% in Tadcaster. According to the 2019 Index of Multiple Deprivation Selby East and Selby West wards show significant deprivation in the categories of income, employment, education, health and crime. They also have high levels of deprivation for the additional indices 'Income Deprivation effecting Children' and 'Income Deprivation Affecting Older People.' The levels for all these indices are more deprived than the English average.

Overview

Food provision is a mix of projects directly addressing food poverty and those with a focus on using food to bring people together and address loneliness or isolation. However, even those projects with a social focus have a clear sense of keeping costs down for participants. All projects have a level of anxiety about being able to maintain a service in a challenging funding landscape and for the long established Selby and District Foodbank, the new Foodbank delivery model in Tadcaster, the very new Sherburn in Elmet Community Larder and the environmentally badged Selby Community Fridge there were clear concerns about helping people to regain maximum control and agency in managing their situations as well as possible in a funding climate challenging sustainable delivery of long-term delivery of free food as new need continues to emerge.

The area borders on or is in close proximity to Leeds, York, Wakefield, East Riding Local Authority areas so some residents access help from outside North Yorkshire e.g from Knottingley Foodbank and support in Tadcaster is linked to Wetherby Foodbank

What is clear is that there are many very committed organisations with staff and / or volunteers determined to support local residents and with the foresight and prudence to reflect on the best ways of continuing to do that. Thank you to all of them and to all of you working in other areas of North Yorkshire.

Selby

A core plank of Selby's offer addressing food poverty is **Selby and District Foodbank**, an independent charity, launched in 2012, which operates as part of the Trussell network. Though based in Selby town the Foodbank supports a wider area including Sherburn-in-Elmet, South Milford, Goole and the surrounding areas although access from out of town for those without a car can be difficult. On offer are nutritionally balanced food parcels, alongside toiletries and cleaning products as well

as seasonal fresh fruit and vegetables when available. Volunteers provide clients with an opportunity to sit down, have a tea or coffee and a chat which helps reduce the isolation that financial hardship can bring. The Foodbank operates on a referral only basis regarding this as the most effective way of ensuring that support reaches those in need but is confident that the dedicated Trussell helplines and partnerships with many local referral agencies means there isn't a barrier to getting support.



Faith Emmanuel, Manager of the Foodbank is clear about its purpose saying that “Demand has grown, as has our operation, but our ultimate ambition remains the same: to end the need for emergency food aid.” She acknowledges that despite the immediate relief offered by a food parcel this provision does not resolve the long-term challenges faced by many clients. She sees the food parcel as creating a “a bit of ‘breathing space,’ helping lift a little bit of the weight on people’s shoulders, so they can tackle bigger, more pressing problems.” Providing additional context Faith says that “Needing food is symptomatic of a greater struggle: whether it is the cost of essentials outstripping income or benefits; debts; the impact of health conditions or simply someone who falls ‘through the cracks’ of all other support – we know there is always an underlying cause to hunger.”

In 2023, in an effort to tackle these underlying problems, Selby and District Foodbank, supported by Trussell, launched a Financial Inclusion Project. This is proving successful and considered a ‘gold standard’ when looking at outcomes vs. Return on Investment. So far the Project has delivered over £1.8 million of financial gains to the local community and prevented over 100 people from becoming

homeless. Citizens Advice North Yorkshire deliver the project through a drop-in session during Foodbank opening hours. Work is underway to find a way to extend the project beyond its contracted end date in 2026.

The Foodbank now buys most of the stock it gives out. Donated goods do not meet demand which continues to grow and without the funds to purchase food and other essential supplies the doors would close. All donations from community groups, religious groups, businesses or private individuals are welcomed and appreciated.

More recently established is **Selby Community Fridge** run by Up for Yorkshire out of their town centre premises, Community House. As part of the national Community Fridge network co-ordinated by Hubbub it seeks to reduce food waste by accepting donated fresh food which is nearing use or best by dates from local supermarkets and shops and making it available free of charge to Fridge users. The Fridge had been open 3 times a week but recent changes in waste legislation have resulted in reduced food donations from local supermarkets and shops. To address this the Fridge is working in partnership with Food Aware, collecting food from their warehouse on a weekly basis. However, collecting the food relies on volunteers and the availability of a vehicle, which means that the Fridge is currently only open one afternoon per week (Wednesday, 2-4pm).

The environmental waste reduction rationale for the fridge should remove any potential stigma around using the fridge although Fridge staff and volunteers are aware that much use is driven by need. Many local families rely on the Fridge for food, particularly for fresh vegetables, bread or other date sensitive products. Selby is home to people from an increasing diversity of ethnic and cultural backgrounds which is reflected in those accessing the fridge. The partnership with Food Aware can sometimes provide ingredients needed for traditional meals but which are expensive, and this is very helpful.

Up for Yorkshire have a wide range of activities including running an Anti-Poverty Partnership and are acutely aware of the developing risk to those who are possibly reliant on the long-term free access to food which the Fridge provides when the cost and so ability of the organisation to continue to offer this is increasingly challenging. Looking forward Up for Yorkshire are considering ways to address this including exploring a transition towards a Community Pantry style delivery. where users pay for membership or contribute towards costs. This model could involve establishing a community space that not only provides access to affordable food but also offers opportunities for education and skill-building, such as cooking on a budget. This approach could empower individuals and families to take greater control of and responsibility for their food provision and budgeting in the long term.

Other food offers have social connection at their heart but also recognise financial challenge for those accessing services. Volunteers at the **Coultish Centre**, a Council owned venue in an area of generally older residents but within one of the town's areas of significant deprivation provide a luncheon club on Mondays. Up for Yorkshire had some initial involvement in this but the Coultish Centre group are now fully in charge and hope to continue for the long-term. They provide a 2 Course

Lunch (meat, two veg, potatoes, pudding) for £5 and also offer breakfast every Thursday costing between £1.50 and £3.50 with a menu including a tea cake, bacon/sausage sarnie or full breakfast plus on Friday for £1 a soup or jacket potato lunch. Around 40 people attend over the week for food with more people attending for company and tea/coffee.

The Big Communithea in Selby, a charity supporting people's mental wellbeing, working with people with diagnosed mental health conditions as well as anyone impacted by the stresses of everyday life has an open door / drop in approach using food as a connector. Monday to Friday anyone can walk in for a free breakfast and / or a nutritious midday meal with 11,500 meals provided last year, an increase on the previous year's 9,800. The nearby Sainsburys and other local businesses are key providers of the food used in meals which volunteers cook on site offering vegetarian and gluten-free alternatives. A typical weekly menu might be:

- **Monday:** Pasta with Bolognese sauce; bananas and custard
- **Tuesday:** Steak pie with potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, and parsnips; strawberries and cream
- **Wednesday:** Vegetable frittata; rice pudding
- **Thursday:** Chicken curry with rice, noodles, or potatoes; ice cream
- **Friday:** Fajita wraps with sour cream, guacamole, salsa; strawberry or chocolate trifle



Big Communithea acknowledges the help of the wider local food and other support networks including Sleep Safe, Hands of Hope, and the community fridge network. The Charity does provide a small number of food parcels in crisis situations when the food bank is closed using a small supply of surplus donations and generously donated Sainsbury's food vouchers.

Selby is benefitting from health inequality funding which has allowed North Yorkshire Council's Healthy Schools team to support four primary schools across the county to open **school food pantries** to serve local communities with good food delivered by Fareshare that would otherwise be going to waste. One of the participating schools is **Barwic Parade Community Primary School**. The school already offer breakfast club provision, and the weekly food pantry is going well. Food is low cost, great value and includes lots of fresh fruit and vegetables. Around 35 families use the pantry during any one week and a bit of price comparison work identified a £13 saving on the goods purchased.

Sherburn in Elmet

Until recently the key offers relating to food were those of **Sherburn Visiting Scheme** which serves older residents of Sherburn and its hinterland with the focus being social connection and the alleviation of loneliness. Three shopping trips each week enable members access to shops in Selby, Sherburn itself and Castleford where they can purchase food or other goods to meet their needs. A Meals on Wheels service delivers hot meals on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays at a charge of £6 for a two course meal. A weekly lunch at the Methodist Church provides participants paying £6 with a two course meal plus refreshments (tea, coffee, juice). There is a small charge for those who use SVS transport to attend.

The **Sherburn in Elmet Community Trust** were involved like many other local organisations in ensuring people could access food during covid and coming out of that crisis responded to cost of living concerns by holding Warm Welcome events with their final pop-up Warm Welcome Cafe of 2024 offering free hot/cold drinks (including hot chocolate with all the trimmings!), soup with a roll, mince pies and chocolate treat bags for children plus Christmas activities for children. The Trust partnered with Up for Yorkshire who sent "Digital Champions" to help people get online and navigate the internet. This type of add-on helps people access wider services which can support any challenges, financial or otherwise, being experienced. The feel of these events is very much about social connectivity but the free food provision and presence of volunteers publicising and collecting donated food for the new Sherburn Community Food Larder raises awareness of other provision. Sherburn Town Council supported the Warm Welcome project with funding.

A significant development alluded to above is the establishment of **Sherburn in Elmet Community Larder** which registered as a Charitable Incorporated Organisation (CIO) with the Charity Commission in December 2024. Sherburn has grown rapidly as a community due to new housing developments now having a Town not Parish Council and having a significantly larger population than Tadcaster. Historically residents of Sherburn were served by Selby District Foodbank but this was logistically challenging for both residents and the Foodbank due to distance and travel challenges although Foodbank staff and volunteers did their best to get food to Sherburn residents. Recent Town Council engagement with community groups and online community conversations plus assessment of Census 2021 data on household deprivation all suggested the need for local food support. Initial conversations were held with the Trussell Trust to explore establishing a satellite service in Sherburn, but these did not bear fruit, so the Community Larder was established offering weekly access to food over as long a period as needed. The rationale for this approach was that ... "we realised that short-term fixes do not normally lead to problems being alleviated and instead led to increased stress on behalf of those who need these services."

The Larder began operating in January 2025 and is open 8am-10:30am every Tuesday in Sherburn in Elmet Methodist Church. The Methodist Church in Sherburn is a key venue for several services and shows the need for generous collaboration to meet local needs. The delivery model has already evolved moving from making up food parcels to order on the day, to asking service users to pre-order their parcels so reducing pressure on volunteers by allowing parcels to be made up in advance. Cereals and household items are also available, and people can select more unusual, donated food items from a 'random' items table. In February, the Pantry adopted a community cafe style with free tea, coffee, and toast available to service users. This further reduces any stigma about using the service. During half-terms, the Pantry runs a breakfast service for any under-18s benefitting from the service with the aim of ensuring that children get at least one breakfast in a week when they may not be able to access school breakfast clubs.

The Larder is seeing use increase steadily as more families are signposted in. Support is currently being offered to 55 households comprising 158 individuals of whom 68 are children, 14 are of state pension age and 17 have disabilities.

The Larder acknowledges that its open access may mean that some beneficiaries could manage adequately, though not necessarily well, without the Larder whilst others may have underlying challenges around poor financial prioritisation and management.

Initial start up costs were aided by access to North Yorkshire Council's Household Support Fund which has been able to support a number of food provisions but the Larder in common with other providers recognises the challenge of responding to a growing user base and increasing costs. The Larder is in conversation with local Town and Parish Councils to explore whether any ongoing funding might be available as the wider funding landscape is very challenging. Although the desire is to maintain a free service the Trustees are open to exploring the introduction of a small charge but with reluctance as user feedback indicates that access to some free food delivers greater flexibility to meet other essential costs.

The Larder also seeks to provide other essential household items particularly to support personal hygiene and household cleaning and is constantly looking for business partners able to offer these and / or surplus non-perishable food.

Tadcaster

Until recently the Salvation Army ran a Foodbank from their Church in Tadcaster. When they announced that they would be moving out of Tadcaster following covid at least two local organisations indicated that they would ensure that an emergency food offer remained in the town. **Tadcaster and Rural Community Interest Company** who run **The Barn Youth and Community Centre** took over provision from the beginning of 2023 and later that year became a member of the Trussell Trust funded **Wetherby and District Foodbank**. In 2024 they began a Wednesday morning Community Cafe at the Barn in Term time and at another venue when holiday schemes are running where anyone struggling with money can have a warm drink and good food, access the foodbank and get free advice from such agencies as Citizens Advice and Moneybuddies.

This is working well with demand remaining fairly steady over the two years of operation and the support around benefits, debt, budgeting, utilities and look at ways of maximising income has meant that a number of people no longer need to use the Foodbank which is a major success.

The Foodbank model has non-perishable food at its heats and Tadcaster and Rural CIC would like to be able to offer fresh food. The Barn has a small incredible Edible scheme running which produces a small amount of free fruit and veg made available to the general public. There are 3 allotment societies in Tadcaster so it might be that future engagement is possible to explore potential for allotment holders to donate any surplus or for Tadcaster and Rural to take on an allotment to grow food specifically for the Foodbank.

Although the Barn supports the wider community young people are its focus and food has become an increasingly important part of its offer. Hangout @ The Barn began as an after school youth cafe in 2021 offering a safe space secondary school kids, particularly latch key kids to come after school and buy fast food snacks. Over time it became clear that even the low cost food (£1 or £2) was unaffordable for some, and the youth workers identified that many young people attending were not eating healthily on a regular basis. This led to a decision in 2024 to make the cafe free and provide a daily menu of healthier hot food. This project has received Foodbank support and North Yorkshire Council Household Support Funding. Since Summer 2025 the provision has developed to include a Monday cookery session where young people prepare and cook their meal and then sit down communally and eat together.

Our thanks to Tom Jenkinson and Warren Davies from North Yorkshire's Council's Localities Service for authoring this wonderful 'Spotlight. If you wish to find out more please contact:

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