

More Than Food

NORTH YORKSHIRE
& YORK

Community Food Bulletin



Welcome to the May 2026 Community Food Bulletin.

This edition brings together frontline insight, local data, and emerging approaches to addressing food insecurity across North Yorkshire and York.

A consistent theme runs throughout:

**Food insecurity is about more than food
— and meaningful solutions must be too.**

In this edition:

Volunteer insights - food provision
on the ground

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awards

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Food provision on the frontline: volunteer insights (2026)

“A single father with four children came to the foodbank. He worked, but had no food for the weekend while waiting for his pay...”

These are not isolated stories.

Recently, 77 volunteers from organisations including Scarborough Community Fridge, Skipton Foodbank, Hambleton Foodshare, Northallerton Fareshare, The People’s Fridge Whitby, Resurrected Bites and the Salvation Army Victory Programme shared their experiences of volunteering within community food provision.

Why volunteers do this work

Across the responses, a clear picture emerges of volunteers motivated not only by a desire to address food insecurity, but to strengthen communities.

Their work goes far beyond food provision, creating welcoming spaces, reducing isolation, and bringing people together.

“It’s not just the food but the human contact. Chatting to people and serving them as guests.”

For some volunteers, environmental concerns are also central, with a strong focus on redistributing surplus food and reducing waste. Others spoke about the personal value of volunteering, describing increased purpose, connection and fulfilment. Many are driven by strong beliefs around fairness, dignity and social responsibility.

What volunteers are seeing

Volunteers overwhelmingly reported that food insecurity has worsened over the past year.

- 9 in 10 volunteers say food insecurity has increased within their communities
- 53 volunteers supported someone with nowhere else to turn
- 46 volunteers supported people experiencing food insecurity for the first time
- 45 volunteers witnessed impacts on mental or physical health
- 27 volunteers supported a child experiencing hunger

“We are seeing working parents having to choose between heat or eat.”

Growing and changing need

Volunteers described increasing numbers of individuals and families seeking support for the first time, including working households and people experiencing sudden or unexpected hardship. Many emphasised that people are often only one unexpected event away from crisis.

“The very grateful mother had skipped meals so her children would have food.”

Alongside rising demand, the nature of need is changing. Volunteers are increasingly supporting people not only with food, but with the wider impacts of financial hardship including stress, poor mental health and isolation. Children and families emerged as a particularly significant concern.

Stories from the Frontline

‘A newly widowed woman asked what she needed to access free food. When told no referral was needed, she burst into tears and said she had no food in the fridge.’

‘A man arrived for food who had no transport and walked 12 miles to our foodbank.’

‘A person who had been on the streets all night came to Breakfast Club and said it was his first hot meal for 24 hours.’

‘A former foodbank recipient later returned with food donations, saying they would never forget the help they had received’

These stories reflect the realities volunteers are encountering every day: people facing sudden crisis, hidden hardship, loneliness and impossible financial choices. Alongside practical support, volunteers are providing dignity, reassurance and human connection at moments when people feel most vulnerable.

Growing pressure on community support

“People shouldn’t have to rely on charity.”

Despite increasing operational and emotional pressure, volunteers continue to provide not only practical support, but compassion, dignity and connection for people who often have nowhere else to turn.

What volunteers want ‘decision-makers’ to understand

- Food insecurity is deeper, broader and closer to home than many realise
- Current systems are not preventing people from falling into crisis
- Food support organisations need sustained, practical investment
- Food insecurity is about far more than food
- Decision-makers need to see the reality on the ground
- Prevention must be prioritised over crisis response.

Volunteers consistently highlighted that people do not access food support lightly. Food insecurity can affect anyone facing rising living costs, illness, debt, insecure work or sudden changes in circumstances. Several respondents described growing concern that community food organisations are being left to fill widening gaps in support.

“Decision-makers should come and do a shift in a foodbank and see the reality for themselves.”

Abundance Project Spotlight



Apples - Damsons - Greengages - Pears - Plums - Quince

To get involved in 2026, visit edibleyork.org.uk

Edible York is a charity that encourages the growing and sharing of local food. Its Abundance Project ensures that fruit from local trees is picked and put to good use, instead of being wasted.

Impact

Last year, volunteers picked 30,000 apples, plums, greengages, pears and quince, including more than 30 varieties of apple alone. Fruit was then delivered to schools, community groups, food banks and others, to be eaten fresh, cooked, or juiced.

Get involved

The charity is always open to new volunteers or new groups who can take the fruit and put it to good use. To volunteer or receive fruit yourself, please email:

abundance@edibleyork.org.uk.

Gavin from Edible York says:

"Abundance is a really enjoyable and pleasing project - you meet some great people, learn more about local food systems, prevent needless waste, and get access to super-fresh, locally-grown, delicious fruit."

Trussell food banks in North Yorkshire



Food insecurity remains a significant issue nationally, with around 7.5 million people living in food-insecure households and 1 in 6 households affected, including a disproportionate number of children.

Demand for food banks remains close to record levels, with over 2.6 million emergency food parcels distributed across the UK in 2025—far higher than pre-pandemic levels.

These national trends are reflected locally across York and North Yorkshire, where rising food, energy and housing costs continue to place pressure on household budgets. In rural areas, challenges such as transport, access to services and hidden poverty can make food insecurity less visible—but no less severe.

Across the county, Trussell food banks in Selby, Skipton, Harrogate and Wetherby are responding to this need. Crucially, this response goes beyond food provision, combining emergency support with advice, income maximisation and wider interventions to help address the root causes of hardship.

Across North Yorkshire, food banks are seeing continued high demand alongside strong outcomes from holistic support, particularly through partnerships with Citizens Advice. Trussell have learned useful ways of supporting peoples resilience through financial inclusion approaches across their North Yorkshire Foodbanks, seen next.

Selby Foodbank has supported 379 new people, more than double its target. Alongside this, over £593,000 in financial outcomes has been achieved, including substantial income gains and debt relief. Importantly, 68 people have moved on from needing the food bank, while 14 households have been prevented from homelessness. However, 160 people still require ongoing support, highlighting the complexity of need.



Harrogate Foodbank has supported 456 new people, significantly above target. While financial gains remain strong at £240,000, debt support has exceeded expectations, with over £415,000 managed or written off. Encouragingly, 179 people (39%) have moved off food bank support, although 277 people continue to need help, showing that recovery can take time.



Wetherby, early activity as Citizens Advice becomes the main advice partner is already demonstrating impact. 95 people have been supported, with £175,000 in financial gains achieved in a short period.



In Skipton, support has also exceeded expectations. Over £220,000 in financial gains and £186,000 in debt support has been delivered. 75 people no longer need the food bank, and 48 households have avoided homelessness, demonstrating the preventative role of advice services.



These figures highlight a consistent picture across the network:

- Demand for food banks remains high
- Financial gains and debt support are helping stabilise households
- Many people are progressing away from crisis

But for others, need remains ongoing and complex. This reinforces that while food banks provide essential emergency help, it is the combination of food provision with advice and support that enables lasting change.

Case study: moving from crisis to stability

Helen's story from Skipton Foodbank demonstrates the difference this joined-up support can make.

When Helen first accessed support, she was living on a very limited income, receiving no benefits, facing debt, and at risk of homelessness, alongside ongoing health conditions. Through coordinated support from food bank advisers and specialist teams, she was helped to access the benefits she was entitled to and stabilise her situation.

As a result:

- Helen successfully claimed her State Pension, including £28,746 in backdated payments
- She received Housing Benefit and full Council Tax Reduction
- Her ongoing income increased by over £21,700 per year
- She was supported with energy and debt advice, alongside emergency food provision.

This support was life-changing. Helen is now in a stable financial position and no longer needs food bank support.

In her own words:

“I wouldn't have been able to cope without you all. Thank you for everything you do.”

DWP Food Poverty Conference



Department
for Work &
Pensions

The sector is shifting...

The DWP Food Poverty Conference (20th May, 2026) brought together representatives from Local Authorities, food partnerships, community food providers, welfare advice services and national networks to explore the future of food insecurity support across the UK.

Discussions highlighted a clear 'sector' shift away from emergency food responses toward longer-term approaches focused on resilience, income maximisation, and the development of co-ordinated local support systems. However, this transition is taking place alongside sustained high demand, wide spread food insecurity, and ongoing uncertainty linked to the move from Household Support Fund (HSF) to the Crisis & Resilience Fund (CRF).

A key theme throughout the conference was the need to move beyond crisis-led provision toward preventative, community-based models. This was reflected in messages such as: 'Moving from crisis to prevention', 'Building resilience', 'Trusted community infrastructure.'

Community supermarkets, pantries and advice hubs were highlighted as key examples of this approach. With models aiming to reduce repeat reliance on food banks, improve access to affordable food, connect residents to wider support services and strengthen community connection and wellbeing.

There was strong recognition that many individuals remain in 'perpetual crisis' due to low incomes, insecure employment, rising housing costs and gaps within the social security system.

Presentations on the day from Stockport, Bolton and Wigan Councils highlighted the impact of proactive benefit uptake work, particularly around Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit.

Reported outcomes included:

- £74 generated for every £1 invested (Stockport Pilot)
- Significant additional income secured for residents
- Improved independence and reduced financial stress, particularly for older people.

Reinforcing the importance of accessible welfare advice, targeted debt support, and proactive outreach at a local level.

There was recognition that many organisations are already integrating food provision with a broader offer of support, including: Welfare advice, debt support, housing advice, social / community activities, wellbeing services and employment support.

A recurring theme was the value of trust and accessibility in service delivery. Effective engagement was associated with:

- **Community-based venues rather than formal council settings**
- **Familiar, locally rooted organisations**
- **Face-to-face interaction**
- **Consistency of provision**
- **Non-judgemental environments**

Conversations focused on the importance of partnership working across systems, including collaboration between local authorities, food partnerships, foodbanks and pantries, advice agencies, NHS services, housing providers & the VCSE sector generally.

More than a meal: how FEAST creates belonging for children and families



For many children, the school holidays are something to look forward to. But for families facing financial pressure, they can also bring worry, isolation and long stretches without structure or support.

Across North Yorkshire, FEAST is helping to change that.

Funded by the Department for Education and co-ordinated by North Yorkshire Together, FEAST provides free holiday activities with healthy meals for children and young people receiving benefits-related Free School Meals. But for many families, the impact reaches far beyond food.

Since launching in 2021, FEAST has served more than 200,000 healthy meals and significantly expanded its reach, with funded places increasing by 80% between 2021 and 2024.

Statistics also show that without the programme, more than half of eligible children would have no structured activities during the school holidays.

Behind those numbers are thousands of individual experiences: children building confidence, trying new activities, making friends and finding safe spaces where they feel welcome.

Providers across the county regularly see children arrive feeling anxious or withdrawn, only to grow in confidence over the course of a holiday programme. For some young people, FEAST offers routine and stability during periods that can otherwise feel difficult or lonely.

One young person who joined FEAST after arriving in the UK as a refugee described how the programme helped them settle into life in North Yorkshire, improve their confidence and feel part of their local community. Another parent recently shared that FEAST gave their child “something positive to get up for” during the holidays.

Across North Yorkshire, FEAST activities are delivered by a diverse network of community organisations, including sports clubs, youth groups, schools, arts organisations and local charities. Whether children are learning to cook, taking part in outdoor adventures, exploring creative activities or simply sharing a meal together, those experiences help create a sense of belonging that can have a lasting impact beyond the holidays themselves.



Food remains at the heart of the programme. Every child attending a FEAST activity receives at least one healthy meal, and many providers involve children directly in preparing food, trying new ingredients and learning practical cooking skills. For some families, this creates opportunities to build confidence around food and nutrition in a positive, informal environment.

School holidays can place significant pressure on household budgets, particularly as food costs continue to rise. By providing free activities, meals and childcare support during holiday periods, FEAST helps ease some of that pressure while ensuring children can stay active, social and engaged.

Importantly, the programme is rooted in local communities. Activities are delivered in villages, towns and neighbourhoods across North Yorkshire by organisations that understand the families they support and the challenges their communities face.

As FEAST prepares for another summer of delivery, the programme continues to show the value of community-led support that brings together food, activity, trusted adults and social connection in one place. Because for many children, what they remember most is not simply the meal they received, but the feeling that somebody welcomed them and gave them somewhere they belonged.

To find out more about FEAST or to explore upcoming activities please visit:

<https://northyorkshiretogether.co.uk/feast>

or contact

hello@northyorkshiretogether.co.uk



HSF Food Support Fund analysis

Tackling food insecurity in North Yorkshire

Since Household Support Fund launched in October 2021, £1,588,000 has been invested in community food infrastructure across North Yorkshire via the HSF Food Support Fund, helping people to access free or low-cost food and essential supplies.

In the latest (and final) phase of the Food Support Fund in 2025/26, £383,000 was invested in 29 community food providers across North Yorkshire.

24,292 households were supported across North Yorkshire, with 20,183 receiving help specifically with food through parcels, meals, vouchers, and community food provision. In total, 69,049 awards were made, the majority through direct items such as food and household essentials.

Behind these figures are real stories.

From crisis to stability

When “Mavis” first visited Skipton Foodbank, she was struggling to afford even the basics. With no benefits in place, mounting debts, and ongoing health issues, she faced the very real risk of going without food.

Through the Household Support Fund, she accessed emergency food parcels at a critical time. Crucially, this support also connected her to wider advice services—enabling her to claim her State Pension, Housing Benefit, and Council Tax Reduction.

The impact was life-changing. Mavis received a backdated payment of £28,746 and now has a stable annual income—removing the need for food bank support altogether.

Her story highlights the role of food support as a first step out of crisis, helping people not only eat, but rebuild their financial security.



When unexpected events lead to food insecurity

Food insecurity can affect anyone—and often follows sudden changes in circumstances.

After a serious accident, one North Yorkshire resident saw his income fall dramatically, leaving him unable to cover essential costs. For the first time, he turned to a food bank for support.

While the immediate need was food, what he found was broader support: a welcoming environment, social connection, and reassurance during a difficult period.

Over time, his confidence grew, and he now hopes to give back in the future.

This story reflects a wider pattern seen across the county.

At Sherburn in Elmet Community Larder, many households access support temporarily—often due to common life events such as illness, job loss, or unexpected costs.

It highlights a key reality: many households are only one unexpected expense away from needing help with food.

Easing ongoing cost-of-living pressures

For many families, food insecurity is not a single crisis but an ongoing challenge.

Community grocery models, such as Resurrected Bites, are helping households manage rising costs by providing affordable access to food. For a small weekly contribution, members can receive groceries worth significantly more—often around £50 for £5.

For one resident, this removed the need to choose between paying bills and buying food—reducing anxiety and allowing them to budget more effectively each month.

These models provide a more sustainable form of support, helping people maintain independence while ensuring access to nutritious food.

Other useful services

North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund

Alongside the Household Support Fund, The North Yorkshire Local Assistance Fund (NYLAF) continues to play a critical role in supporting residents facing immediate financial crisis.

During 2025/26, 11,300 applications were received, 80% of which related to emergency food and energy support.

Over 90% of applications (10,323) were approved during the year and in total, £1.29 million was distributed through awards and essential items, helping prevent destitution, food insecurity and loss of utilities.

In addition to these efforts, the Rainbow Centre in Scarborough received approximately £30,000 from NYLAF and delivered 1,003 food parcels to local individuals and families on behalf of the Scheme.

For many applicants, the NYLAF represents the final point of support before crisis escalates further.

Crisis & Resilience Fund

The Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) is a three-year UK Government initiative providing financial support and resilience-building services to low income households in North Yorkshire and York from April 2026 to March 2029.

The CRF replaces the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payment, aiming to help residents manage unexpected financial shocks while strengthening long-term financial resilience. It is administered by Local Authorities with flexibility to tailor support locally in line with national guidance.

Both North Yorkshire and City of York Councils have now received their allocations. In North Yorkshire, we are currently designing the full Crisis and Resilience Fund programme to give the most effective support to our residents, but we are still able to help.

For information and updates on the North Yorkshire scheme, please visit:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/benefits/crisis-and-resilience-fund>.

Breastfeeding Friendly Venues Awards



In North Yorkshire, the Breastfeeding Friendly Venues Award has been established to recognize venues that welcome breastfeeding mothers.

76 businesses and venues across the county have pledged to support breastfeeding, including libraries, leisure centers, and children and family hubs.

The Equality Act 2010 provides legal protections for breastfeeding mothers, prohibiting discrimination in public and workplace settings.

Although North Yorkshire breastfeeding rates are above the national average, they reduce by 15-20% when infants are aged between 6-8 weeks.

By promoting the scheme and encouraging more venues to take part this will support the confidence of mothers to feed when they are in public.

Details of venues who are enrolled on the award can be found at:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/healthy-living/other-health-information/breastfeeding-friendly-venues>

If you know a venue that would like to join the award, they can request an information pack by emailing:

HASBusinessSupportCH@northyorks.gov.uk.

The process is very easy to complete, and they will be provided with a certificate and stickers to display in their venue.



Map of breastfeeding friendly venues

Did you know there are a number of breastfeeding peer supporter groups in North Yorkshire?

These groups provide families with breastfeeding support, infant nutrition advice and emotional support. There is no need to book - families are very welcome to just drop in to any of the groups which meet at these locations:

- Knaresborough library – every Wednesday, 1pm to 2pm
- Northallerton library – every Tuesday, 10am to 11.30am
- Pickering library – every Tuesday, 1.30pm to 3pm
- Selby fire station community room – fortnightly on a Thursday, 10.30am to midday
- Sherburn-in-Elmet Old Girls' School Community centre – fortnightly on a Thursday 1.30pm to 2.30pm
- Scarborough library – every Friday, 9.30am to 11am.

Healthy Start Scheme NHS



Healthy Start helps families and pregnant women on low incomes with the cost of healthy food, milk, and vitamins.

It is available for women from 10 weeks pregnancy and/or have children under four and in receipt of eligible benefits.

For pregnant women under 18 they do not need to receive benefits to be eligible.

Further details of who can apply and how to apply can be found at Get help to buy food and milk (Healthy Start)

If eligible, families can receive the following:

- £4.25 each week after the 10th week of pregnancy
- £8.50 each week for children from birth to one years old
- £4.25 each week for children between one and four years old
Healthy Start Vitamins can be accessed for free once enrolled on the scheme. Vitamins are available for pregnant women and children up to the age of 4.

Vitamins can be collected in person from identified venues in North Yorkshire.

Details of locations can be found at:

<https://www.northyorks.gov.uk/healthy-living/other-health-information/healthy-start-scheme>

There is also an option to purchase vitamins at some children and family's hubs if the family is not entitled to Healthy Start Scheme.

We have free posters to promote HSS where you work. If you would like copies, please email:

HASBusinessSupportCH@northyorks.gov.uk

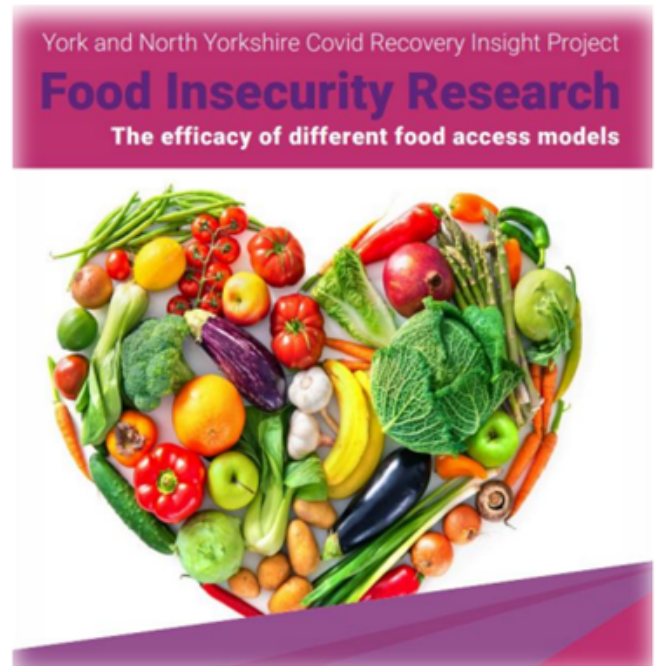
Community of Practice Recordings

If you have not yet seen our Food Insecurity website take a look here: <https://www.skyblue.org.uk/foodinsecurity/>

We particularly invite you to visit the Community of Practice ('CoP') recordings. These 'CoPs' are conversations that explore key recommendations of the Food Insecurity Project launched at the Food Summit in September 2023 where we investigated ways to address food insecurity in York & North Yorkshire.

Topics so far have included:

- Place Based Collaborative Models and Food Ladders
- Cash (Income)First Approaches
- More than Food
- Mixed Income Models
- Social supermarkets, pantries, pay as you feel cafes
- Growing.



If you would like to join us for the next Community of Practice discussion please let us know! They are always well attended and different providers not only benefit from at least two topical and relevant guest speakers but can also share very practical tips and common challenges in a safe space all about doing things better together.

Anyone wishing to speak at a future CoP should simply contact:

Adele.Wilson-Hope@northyorks.gov.uk

Shape the Future of Community Food Training – we want your ideas!

Are you interested in training or experiential learning for community food provision or volunteers?

Do you have ideas for a coordinated training programme to strengthen skills and support local food initiatives?

We'd love to hear from you.

What knowledge, skills, or training would make the biggest difference?
What benefits could training bring to your organisation or community?
Share your suggestions or questions by emailing:

Amber.Graver@northyorks.gov.uk or
Adele.Wilson-Hope@northyorks.gov.uk

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Next Community Food Bulletin:

If you have any news or stories that you would like to share with this network, which comprises community food provisions across North Yorkshire & York as well as other stakeholders interested in supporting the ambition to reduce food insecurity, please email Amber.Graver@northyorks.gov.uk or Adele.Wilson-Hope@northyorks.gov.uk.

Our next bulletin will go out in November 2026 so please have any information to us no later than mid-October.

Disclaimer: Any opinions or statements expressed in this Bulletin are those of the author's and do not necessarily reflect those of North Yorkshire or City of York Council. Information found in this document is presented in good faith and is deemed accurate at time of publication (May 2026), however, the authors cannot accept responsibility for any errors or omissions.