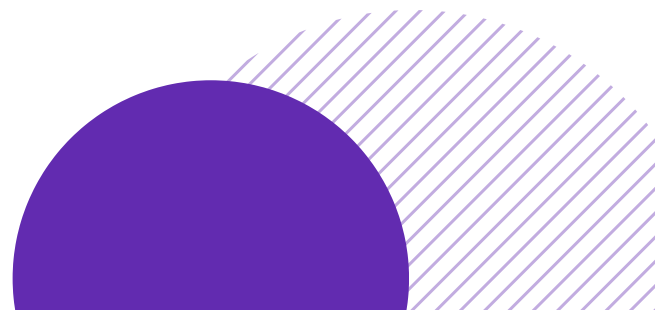




# FSF IMPACT AND PANTRY USE IN THE LIVERPOOL CITY REGION



LIVERPOOL  
JOHN MOORES  
UNIVERSITY



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- 1** Executive Summary
- 2** Introduction
- 4** Context and Overall Findings
- 7** Impact Statement
- 8** Conclusion
- 9** Appendix 1
- 10** Appendix 2



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

**Fans Supporting Foodbanks (FSF)** grew out of concern from individuals and organisations around the deteriorating social and economic conditions of many people within the Liverpool City Region (LCR). FSF have developed a mobile pantry model serving six pantries across Liverpool. Namely those at **The Greenhouse Project (Lodge Lane), Everton in the Community's Blue Base, Fazakerley Federation Centre, Vauxhall Community Neighbourhood Centre, Netherley Youth & Community Centre and St Mary's Millennium Centre (West Derby)**.

This report is based on 176 surveys completed in person with pantry users along with field notes from these six food pantries between April 2021 - September 2023.

## Key findings:

- **67%** of those using the six pantries are female.
- **78%** of users are over the age of 40. (**40-65: 40%, 65+ 38%**).
- **62%** of users have been using a pantry for over a year.
- Word of mouth (**59%**) is the primary means by which users discover the pantry.
- Use is driven by people collecting food for themselves (**82%**), children (**43%**) and a spouse (**25%**).
- **82%** of users find security in using the pantry. This is, however, not a static feeling and the emotions developed over time.
- Emotions expressed by users revolve around **embarrassment moving to joy(48%) and acceptance (43%) over time**.
- **53%** of users ranked the pantries as very important.
- Users appear to use the pantry to **supplement their weekly shopping and to assist with the financial burdens** exacerbated by austerity and the cost of living crisis.

## Key recommendations:

- **Develop a series of vignettes** to help remove the stigma from pantry use as part of a general awareness campaign.
- Increased availability of **fresh food and sanitary items**.
- **Diversification of offering to include school uniforms and clothing**.
- **Potential service outside of normal working hours** to serve (under)employed and/or individuals with childcare issues.
- **Host or seek to collaborate with other services** to reach demographics not currently served by the mobile pantry model.
- **Targeted Google and Facebook ads** geolocated to the postcodes of individual pantries to help raise awareness.

# INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade in the United Kingdom (UK), the fastest-growing sector has been food banks and associated services. **'Put us out of business'** is a call frequently heard from those supporting the running of food banks, food pantries, and/or community food spaces. Yet instead of reducing the need, demand continues to grow. In early 2011 a total of 65 food service centres were in existence (Trussell Trust, 2021). This figure has risen to an estimated **2,500** Trussell Trust and independent food banks operating across the UK (Independent Food Aid Network, 2023). Correspondingly, the number of users has increased to a point where nearly 3 million food parcels have been distributed by the Trussell Trust network alone (figure 1). This network represents only a section of pantries, kitchens and community action groups across the country, which means the real number is significantly higher.

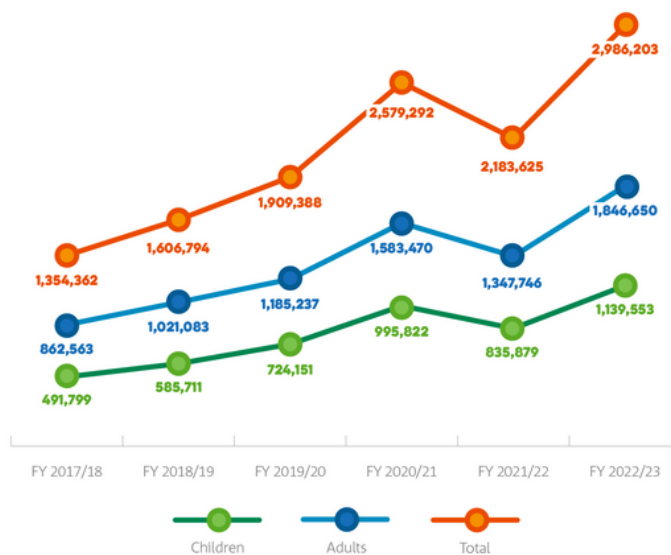


Figure 1: Number of food parcels given to users of food banks in the Trussell Trust network. Source: Trussell Trust, 2023

### DRIVERS OF USE

- Insufficient income from social security (e.g. Universal Credit)
- Ill health or adverse life experiences
- Lack of (in)formal support (e.g. reliance on family & friends)

The use of food banks, pantries, and food spaces is driven by an **economic need**, with wage and pension stagnation alongside unemployment driving difficulties in purchasing food and household products after utilities have been paid. As a consequence, evidence suggests that food banks seem to be used the most by those individuals who are being **under-served by the welfare state** with government austerity measures, and the connected cost of living crisis increasing reliance on these services.

Within this context, FSF’s mobile pantry model has sought to provide a less stigmatising environment in which people can access food and better connect with their local community.



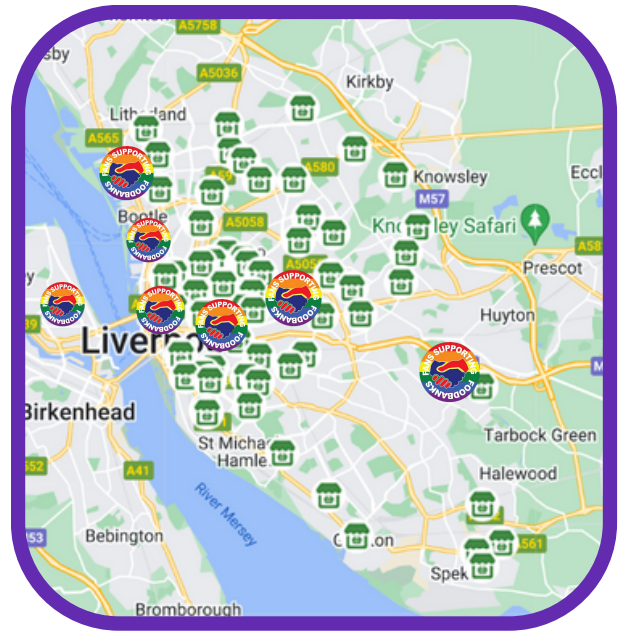
## LIVERPOOL CITY REGION: FOOD PANTRY CONTEXT

**50+**

At present there are over **50** foodbank, food pantries, and/ or food spaces - 7 are FSF resourced. Such spaces are often led by local community members/ organisations that also offer activities, or services beyond food.

The Public Health Institute at LJMU state that **four of the six** boroughs which constitute the LCR are in the top **20%** of most deprived local authorities in England (Lewis, Ubido, and Jones, 2021)

**20%**



**47%**

The LCR holds almost half (47%) of the most deprived 20% lower 'super output' areas nationally (Liverpool City Council, 2020)

Food provision services in LCR are coming to a critical mass with the demand from communities increasing but supply reducing (Yeoman & Tilston, 2022).

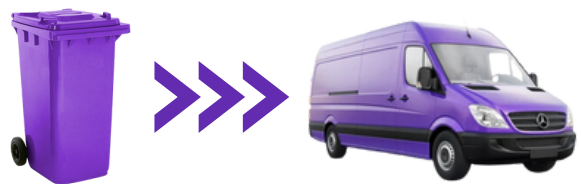


## FSF BACKGROUND

**2015**

FSF was founded in 2015 through a partnership between Liverpool's **Spirit of Shankly** and Everton's **Blue Union**.

From collecting food in a wheelie bin outside Everton and Liverpool games on matchdays, FSF now supplies **25%** of all food donations to North Liverpool foodbanks.



### 6 LCR Pantries and 1 breakfast club resourced by FSF

- The Greenhouse Project.
- Everton in the Community Blue Base.
- Fazakerley Federation Centre.
- Vauxhall Neighbourhood Community Centre.
- Netherley Youth & Community Centre
- St Mary's Millennium Centre
- The Wirral Breakfast Club\*

Over **40** FSF groups in the UK across sports (e.g rugby league) as well as national borders (e.g. Glasgow, Belfast, Dublin) .

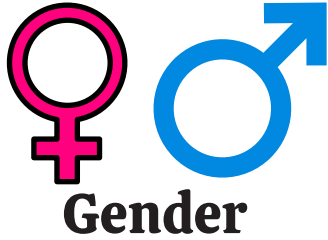
**40**



Target: To have a FSF group for each club in England.  
Vision: To **Eradicate food poverty.**

\*This report is based mainly on the surveys done across the 6 pantries

# CONTEXT AND OVERALL FINDINGS



While **67%** of users were female, **33%** were male.

## Employment Status

Individuals who are in retirement account for **41%** of users, while a further **24%** of users are currently employed and **20%** are working.

## Age

**40% 40-65**

**38% over 65**

A range of users access the six FSF pantries. However, the pantries predominantly serves an older demographic.

## Length Using Pantry

**62% using for around a year or more**

**31%** were aware of the pantry because of friends and family.

Social media (**4%**) and other service providers (**5%**).

Leaflets and Google were also reported (**8%**).



**38%**

shared they had a disability.

# CONTEXT AND OVERALL FINDINGS

## Importance of the Pantry

8.86 out of 10

53% of those who answered selected 10.

## Word of Mouth

59%

Users generally find out about the pantry through word of mouth.

## Security

64% indicated increased security through pantry usage. From conversations with the survey team, users often indicated this feeling had developed over time.



*I have got depression, anxiety and I really have nothing...I didn't eat yesterday and have £5 in my account that I've been given... but then I've seen this...this is great it's what I need to feel better.*

*A year ago, it was lifesaving. It was hard to go to initially but has helped me keep my head above water. I'm really grateful for the service. Been part of allowing me to get back on track.*

# CONTEXT AND OVERALL FINDINGS

**JOY**

**48%**

**ACCEPTANCE**

**44%**

*I felt embarrassment, but because other people are in the same boat it reduces the embarrassment.*



A complex range of emotions accompanies the use of the pantries. Joy and acceptance were the most unified. However, the quote indicates some of the complexity as people became more comfortable over time.

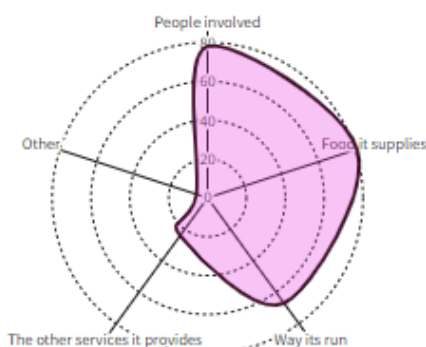
**On a sliding scale of 1-10 (1 Don't eat - 10 Save money) the average response was 7.89. This indicates the primary motivation of those attending is to assist with the cost of living crisis rather than starvation and extreme poverty.**

## REASON FOR USE

Users rated the pantries as successful because of the food they supply (**81%**) and the people who run them (**78%**).

This use is driven by people collecting food for themselves (**82%**), children (**43%**) and a spouse (**25%**).

Captured within the other category are frequent references to grandchildren, which is reflective of the demographic surveyed.





# IMPACT STATEMENT

As a research team, we have agreed the following statements of impact based on our collective research and experience with FSF - The FSF pantries have a significant and unique impact on the communities they serve. Despite being a self-proclaimed 'sticking plaster' on the gaping wounds that have appeared in communities across Liverpool, the mobile pantries have become a permanent lifeline for thousands across the city.

FSF pantries serve between 6-700 people per week with a basket of food, meat, vegetables and other essential items to serve needy households - this figure rises in winter due to increased energy bills. At the lower end FSF has around 33,400 patrons per year serving, a lower estimation, of 90,000 people in the next year, an increase from 75,000 over the last 12 months.



- **Resistance:** Though their shared values and beliefs FSF have managed to raise enough funds and resources to lead a sustained resistance against food poverty and loss of dignity.
- **Community:** By igniting the power of football fandom FSF have also managed to empower various communities across the LCR to organise, volunteer and re-connect around the critical issues surrounding food poverty.
- **Solidarity:** The mobile pantries have enabled the fans to share and spread solidarity to areas of the city most in need. In this way they have proven what diverse sets of fans and communities can do when working together towards change.

More than supplying food/resources what the FSF movement in Liverpool shows is that by activating fans and empowering communities the risks and indignities of food poverty are held back, for now.

The most valuable impact of the FSF pantries is not about food but another essential human need - **belonging**. For a few hours a week they allow people who are in need and/or isolated to connect with each other and their communities.

# CONCLUSION



**Biggest barrier to using food pantry is weather (29%).**

**43%**

**Of users would like to see more health and well being advice**

It is clear from responses that pantry users felt the service provided across each location was of a high quality. Many respondents believed little could be improved. Those who offered thoughts on areas of development made reference to the following mainly:

- **Additional support offerings:** Certain users wished to see other services provided while at the pantry. These included advice on health and wellbeing foremost but also advice for work, money and coping with debt along with English classes. Many patrons simply wanted more opportunities to socialise with others **(35%)**.
  - **Greater food/provision choice:** A large number of users highlighted they would like, where possible, variance in the food offered (particularly fresh food). Others referred to the opportunity to select from items away from food such as clothes, children's' items and pet food.
  - **Operations, atmosphere, and space:** Certain pantry users raised a desire to see indoor space/ shelter near the services, especially during winter months. Providing a queuing system that saw additional offerings while waiting (such as hot drinks) was also noted.
- The **38%** disability figure could be analysed in greater detail. **Are these chronic or short-term? Is there any government support (e.g. PIP) provided to these individuals? Are those collecting for others doing so to support disabled family, friends and neighbours?**
  - Morning pantries mean an increased population of retired and unemployed people. This suggests that sections of the population requiring support are being missed i.e. those in work/underemployed or those with childcare issues). **It is worth exploring if there is a way to host an evening or weekend pantry to support this demographic or create further links with pre-existing services to help meet this need.**
  - Word of mouth is an issue as you are reliant on chance. The communities surrounding FSF are a tremendous part of what makes the pantries feel like a community. **However, targeted area marketing through FB or Google Ads for small costs could draw in more users who may not move within the communities FSF has currently accessed and supported.**

It is worth highlighting the overwhelmingly positive outlook that patrons had of the service and FSF more broadly. The words **'life-line'** or **'life-saving'** appeared again and again in people's brief descriptors of the pantries, confirming the crucial role they and FSF play in the lives of people within the Liverpool city region currently.

# APPENDIX 1

## **Research timeline**

A research team of 4 volunteered and observed across the 6 FSF supported pantries and visited the Wirral breakfast club between April 2021 - September 2023. Only after a period of volunteering at each pantry site did the surveys take place with the assistance of long-standing volunteers and FSF organisers. This report represents an overview of the surveys across the 6 pantries and forms part of a larger project into football fan activism in the UK and Europe.

176 short data 'captures' in the form of surveys conducted on iPads alongside pantry users took place from November 2022 - April 2023.

## **Acknowledgements**

The research team would like to thank all the volunteers and organisers associated with Fans Supporting Foodbanks and the pantry users themselves for helping us build a better understanding of their daily realities. We hope these pages do some justice to your ongoing fight for dignity and against inequality.

This project was produced with help from Liverpool John Moores University with funding from The British Academy.

The survey was designed and data analysed with the generous help of Cynefin and the Sensemaker app.



# APPENDIX 2

## **Research team**

Dr Jack Sugden\*  
Dr Christopher Faulkner  
Dr Clay Gransden  
Dr Matthew Hindmarsh

\*Principle investigator - For more information about this ongoing study please email [J.T.Sugden@LJMU.ac.uk](mailto:J.T.Sugden@LJMU.ac.uk)

## **References**

Lewis, C., Ubido, J., and Jones, L. (2021) Vulnerable individuals and groups profile Liverpool City Region March 2021. [Online] *Public Health Institute*. Available at: <https://www.ljmu.ac.uk/~media/phi-reports/pdf/2021-03-vulnerable-groups-profile-liverpool-city-region.pdf>

Liverpool City Region. (2022) New report reveals scale of food poverty in Liverpool City Region as cost-of-living crisis deepens. [Online] 21st December 2022, Available at: <https://www.liverpoolcityregion-ca.gov.uk/new-report-reveals-scale-of-food-poverty-in-liverpool-city-region-as-cost-of-living-crisis->

Yeoman, S., and Tilston, L. (2022) Sustainable and Affordable Food for Liverpool City Region Recommendations for Change. [Online] VS6, Available at: [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dbd9d4554374e25938375ad/t/63a1c070f3565e6f66c2299c/1671544947268/ASF\\_Recommendations+for+Change+December+2022.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5dbd9d4554374e25938375ad/t/63a1c070f3565e6f66c2299c/1671544947268/ASF_Recommendations+for+Change+December+2022.pdf)

