



Impact Statement

2022/2023

ashton
Supporting
North Belfast



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

**COMMUNITIES
AND PLACE**

What is the Pantry?

The Pantry is an example of a community supermarket that aims to provide support for individuals and local north Belfast families experiencing food insecurity as well as other issues stemming from the cost-of-living crisis.

The Pantry model differs from traditional food banks in that it doesn't just provide access to food or other essential goods but works to implement a multi-service approach. For example, in addition to shopping for weekly groceries Pantry users can avail of additional support from trained mentors and develop skills in budgeting, debt management, cooking, meal preparation and nutrition.



Each Pantry user will also be eligible for a tailored welfare benefits audit as well as a debt assessment session and once they have completed the 12-week programme can be retained as a Pantry volunteer.

“During the recent Pandemic nearly one-in-five people in Northern Ireland lived in poverty, including over 100,000 children. with 1 in 14 households in food insecurity”.

Joseph Roundtree Foundation (2022)

The Pantry is being delivered by the Ashton Centre but the model has been developed with financial input and support from the Lower North Belfast Family Support Hub, Fairshare NI, Belfast Charitable Society, North Belfast Advice Partnership, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Communities in Transition programme. It has also brokered further support from private donations which are able to sponsor families directly or designated shelves in the Pantry itself.

You too can also sponsor a Pantry member family or shelf by telephoning 028 9074 2255 or emailing Fionnuala.black@ashtoncentre.com. Every £1 you invest will create a benefit of £2.24 in personal income, saving food waste and improving opportunities for users.

Produced in collaboration with Queen's Communities and Place (QCAP) the remainder of this impact statement documents in more detail the Pantry model and its impact on its users and the wider community to date.

How does it work?

Rather than just offer a food handout the Pantry aims to better understand and tackle underlying factors that are creating food insecurities as well as support individuals so they can respond more effectively to the wider cost of living crises.

The Pantry is operated via membership programme with a weekly fee of £5 which enables a member to receive approximately £40 worth of grocery items and other cleaning or hygiene products.

After 12 weeks and on completion of the programme, users can transition into a volunteer role and continue to avail of the same weekly shop for £10 per week. Members access the Pantry at a pre-arranged time and engage in an informal meeting with the Pantry co-ordinator. They can then complete their shopping and can select items based on a colour coded system that corresponds to their retail value.

All members who regularly attend the Pantry will also engage with one of the capacity building and support programmes that will be introduced by the mentor. They also undertake an external income maximization and debt assessment session with an external benefits advisor.

Collectively this additional participation will identify the underlying factors that are negatively impacting on the users' circumstances and work to provide them with the tools to create positive outcomes for themselves and their families.



OE
THE PANTRY
CHURCHILL STREET
BELFAST

Persil Bio 40 Wash	9.00
Ribena - Strawberry	2.49
Weetabix 72 pack	5.75
Bread	1.00
Mayflower Medium Curry Mix	1.25
Irish mature White cheddar	1.49
sponge daddy	1.00
Dolmio Onion & garlic 750g	2.25
Actimel 8 pk 800g	3.00
Garnier - Extra Gentle Wipes	1.65
Sweet Clems	1.25
Chestnut smoked Bacon	2.50
Mini Oreo	1.00
mc cains home chips	2.50
Frozen Pork Sausages	1.50
Chicken fillet Bites	2.50

Total: £40.13

Paid By: CUSTOMER PAYMENT 5.00
COMMUNITY ASSISTANCE 35.13

No Change Due

001-001-0000025 11/05/2022 13:33:28
FIONNUALA Items: 16

OE I

Pantry Outputs so far

58 adults and households have benefited from receiving food and other services from the Pantry since June 2022.



213 children have benefited from receiving food and other services from the Pantry.



16 adults have been engaged in further training and employability support programmes.



17 adults have been engaged in a personal development programme to develop new skills in areas such as meal preparation on a budget.



30 adults have been engaged in an income maximisation programme and debt support from a specialist advice worker.



14 adults have availed of services designed to improve their physical or mental health and wellbeing.



The Pantry is supporting **1** full time salaried staff member and has developed **5** part time volunteers.



A retail food value of **£26,251.58** and other household products has been allocated to individuals and families using the Pantry.



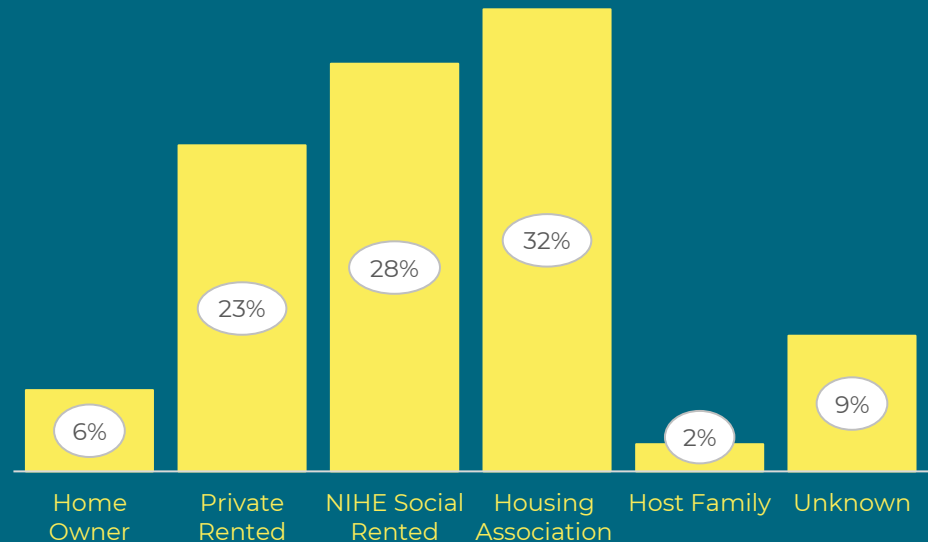


Supported Households

Project data has been collected to provide a better understanding and socio-economic profile of individuals and families using the Pantry. Analysis of this anonymous data shows that:

- Households availing of the Pantry and its services are spread across different parts of the local north Belfast area and over 90% are living in the Top 10% most deprived electoral wards using NINIS' multiple deprivation data.
- The Pantry is supporting families from the Greater New Lodge as well as beneficiaries that are travelling from Ardoyne and the predominantly PUL Tigers Bay, which demonstrates the cross-community reach and impact of the Pantry.

- 60% of Pantry users are living in accommodation that is either socially rented from the Northern Ireland Housing Executive or a local Housing Association such as Choice, Apex, Newington or NB Housing.
- 23% are living in private rented accommodation and 6% own their home outright whilst 2% presented as Ukrainian refugees living with a host family.



- 66% of the Pantry beneficiaries are out of work and currently in receipt of welfare benefits. 17% of users preferred not to declare their employment circumstances and 17% are currently in either in full or part time work.
- The latter statistic is important and highlights the growing prevalence of in-work poverty. It also demonstrates how the Pantry model is connecting with single or low income families that are also experiencing food insecurities.

Connecting the Community and its Services

The diagram below emphasises how the Pantry is more than an outlet to access affordable food and other household products. The model has been developed by the Ashton Centre but brokered front end support from local philanthropic institutions like Belfast Charitable Society who provided the capital investment to fit out the supermarket with fridges, shelving and other equipment. It has also been developed in close collaboration with several local community and statutory partners such as the Lower North Belfast Support Hub, who collectively are able to refer potential members from local communities beyond the New Lodge in areas such as Ardoyne, Cliftonville, Tigers Bay and Mount Vernon.



Embedded across the internal multi-service networks of the Ashton Centre, the Pantry can facilitate rapid and effective referrals across several potential support pathways that are listed above. This provides flexible but also integrated support directly at the point of need and allows members to connect with services that can potentially make a difference. This approach represents a departure from the traditional food bank model and works to build capacity across relevant areas to better manage food poverty and related challenges stemming from the cost of living crisis.

What the members of the Pantry think

“It was a great all-round experience, and the staff were so helpful listening to my problems. You were able to get a lot of food for your money and I was shocked that even branded items of food were included in my shopping basket”

“Access to the Pantry has helped to relieve a lot of stress, allowed me to save money and buy more things to help support my daughter”

“I left my last job in March and found it really hard having no income and 3 children to feed. If it wasn't through the help I received through the Pantry I would have really struggled”

“I have loved coming to the Pantry every week. It has been really helpful, especially the budgeting training which has helped with rising costs and allowed me to put more money aside to cover my gas and electricity bills”

“I have been able to feed my 2 kids and myself for the past 12 weeks and I feel like I have not let them down. The referrals made as a result of talking to the mentor also had a really positive impact”

“Being a member of the Pantry has allowed me to provide several meals for my family during each week but has also encouraged me to try new ingredients, recipes and produce I wouldn't normally use”



A community response to crisis

Further to providing members with access to affordable food as well as relevant services and support, the Pantry is being harnessed as part of a broader community effort led by the Ashton Centre to help tackle the cost of living crisis.

Through engagement with the staff team, Pantry members have been signposted to other community initiatives that might have a positive impact on their lives. For example, during the summer months, members with young children were encouraged to visit the pop-up school uniform shop (also located in the Ashton Centre) to avail of unwanted or new uniforms in preparation for the new school term.

Since November 2022, a clothing pop-up store has also been established offering a provision of coats and warm clothes and has already been accessed by over 100 local families.

The Pantry model has also been recently supplemented by a community fridge initiative. Developed in partnership with funding from Hubbub UK and food donations from local Lidl stores, the fridge is located on the ground floor of the Ashton Centre. Unlike the Pantry it does not require a membership to avail of the food on offer and has been designed to provide crisis support for those suffering acutely from food insecurities.



Similarly to the Pantry, these additional services place an emphasis on re-cycling and re-distributing food surpluses or unwanted household goods or products to those most in need. This in turn offers a practical framework to promote the development of a more circular economy that works to reduce waste and has a positive impact on the environment.

Recently the Pantry has also supported a drop-in facility, that allows local members of the community to access a warm room with access to basic tea and coffee facilities. This is targeted at families or older people that may be struggling with the recent rise in energy costs and are unable to heat their homes sufficiently.

These initiatives do not offer sustainable long term solutions to the current cost of living crisis. However, collectively they do provide access to immediate support and source of respite for those families in critical need.

Creating cross-cutting impacts



Food Resilience

- Pantry members have been afforded access to a varied, affordable and high-quality supply of groceries and other relevant household products to support their families basic needs.
- Cost savings to their weekly food bills has allowed users to put more money towards other household bills and reduce the impact of the recent rise in energy costs.
- Pantry users' awareness and relationship with food and nutrition has improved.
- This has been driven by the acquisition of meal preparation skills via the cookery classes and Pantry access has encouraged a willingness to embrace new ingredients, fresh produce and different recipe ideas.



Service Connectivity

- Operated within a multi-service social enterprise like the Ashton Centre the Pantry is able to signpost its members to other relevant support or services.
- For example, members have been signposted to LEMIS+ for employability support or Bridge of Hope to avail of services that can improve their physical, mental and emotional wellbeing.
- Other members have been referred to wider services like domestic violence charity: Women's Aid.
- The Pantry model has brokered additional interest and support from other funders and members of the local business community that have pledged financial support to the project.



Capacity + Skills

- The Pantry model has provided users with several pathways that facilitates learning or the development of new skills in areas like debt management, budgeting and basic meal preparation.
- Some have also received personal development support to help them connect with further work or educational opportunities.
- Unlike traditional food bank models, the Pantry offers a more holistic approach that works to better understand the key issues or causal factors of poverty.
- Experienced Pantry staff use this understanding to make informed referrals or build capacity in areas that will address these needs and issues in the long term.



Environment + Waste

- A community fridge has been developed in partnership with Hubbub UK and Lidl stores to provide crisis support for families that are struggling to afford the rising cost of food.
- This is helping to reduce food waste but also providing ready access to food and other goods at the point of need.
- The Pantry connects with several other relevant projects (e.g. a second hand school uniform pop-up shop) that offer targeted support for families struggling to cope with the cost of living crises.
- Similarly to food sourced from the Pantry, these projects place an emphasis on re-using or re-distributing items that are needed by the community thus promoting more sustainable circular economy practices.





Investing for Social Impact

To better understand the potential impacts and social value created by The Pantry, academics from QCAP (Queen's Communities and Place) have utilised data collated internally by Pantry staff to develop a social value impact analysis.

The calculation for the analysis was based on Pantry running costs, the amount of secured and donated income to date, current outputs based on 58 adults/213 children as well as a series of performance proxies sourced from Fareshare and the HACT social value bank. Together these can be analysed to valorise the potential impacts realised from privately investing in the Pantry model or by providing other types of financial support like grant aid.

These impacts are presented and explained in more detail in the aligning table and collectively they reinforce the cross-cutting impacts created by the Pantry. They also forecast the value of social return created after 5 years. The relevant variables have been deflated for deadweight at 7% and attribution at 9% in line with the Fareshare social value analysis completed by NEF (New Economics Foundation)

Impact Area	Value will be generated by	In 5 years, the value will be
	Circular Food Chain Impacts Access to affordable and surplus food products, regular meals, environmental impacts from preventing food going to landfill	£166,173
	Becoming Debt Free Advice obtained will reduce individual debt, improvement in financial literacy, less likely to use high interest pay day loans	£14,828
	Getting Access to Job Training Providing employability support, dedicated job training, improving access to labour market or education.	£44,732
	Able to Obtain Advice Locally Creating referral pathways, signposting members to relevant support, brokering wider service access.	£506,321
	Regular Volunteering Creating volunteering roles for Pantry members, giving back and supporting other community members in need.	£69,921
	Able to Save Regularly Income maximization, increase in financial literacy, promoting more positive domestic saving habits.	£292,577

Every **£1** invested in the Pantry will create a social return of **£2.24** over a 5-year period **£1 : £2.24**

If you would like more information about the Pantry or would like to provide sponsorship for a Pantry member family or shelf you can do so by emailing Fionnuala.black@ashtoncentre.com or telephoning 028 9074 2255.

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