Building Resilience: The Role of Food Clubs in UK Food Security

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Executive Summary

This report presents the first large-scale, independent analysis of the affordable food club model, examining its role in strengthening UK food security. It draws on extensive survey data from over 14,000 low-income households across England and Scotland, providing insights and policy recommendations of relevance to all four nations of the United Kingdom. The foundational argument for this research is that for a growing number of UK households, food insecurity is not a series of isolated emergencies, but a state of structural precarity that systematically erodes financial, social, and psychological wellbeing.

To frame the analysis, this report uses the 'Food Ladders' model. This is a framework designed to provide a conceptual structure for understanding how different forms of food support activity contribute to food security and resilience. The ladder comprises three rungs, supported by the structural 'rails' that hold them together. These rails include actors who provide crucial resources such as funding, local government policy support, and community connections. Rung one, 'Catching,' includes support like food banks that help people in immediate crisis. Rung two, 'Capacity Building,' includes activities such as food clubs that help people develop skills, build social connections, and become more adaptable to cope with future crises. Rung three, 'Self-Organising,' involves community-led initiatives such as food co-ops and social enterprises that transform local food systems to eliminate vulnerability. The focus of this report is to determine the effectiveness of food clubs as a rung two activity for building someone's capability to be food secure.

Key Findings:

Food insecurity is a state of structural precarity with cascading harms. This report's foundational finding is that food insecurity is not a simple lack of money but a complex 'architecture of hardship'. It is a state of structural precarity characterised by profound instability and lack of resilience. The research demonstrates how this initial precarity creates cascading harms to psychological wellbeing, social connection, and physical health. The analysis also counters the 'skills deficit' narrative, showing that structural barriers—such as poor housing and time poverty—not a lack of capability, are the primary drivers of the crisis.

Different support models serve distinct forms of hardship. The comparative analysis demonstrates that food clubs and food banks are not interchangeable; they support different populations. Food banks (Rung 1) are an essential response for

households in acute crisis. Food clubs (Rung 2) are a tool for those managing chronic precarity, often from a position of greater underlying stability. The analysis also identifies a third group in a compounded crisis, squeezed by in-work poverty and caring responsibilities, who strategically use both services. This confirms that a household's specific circumstances determine its pathway to support.

Regular and sustained participation in food clubs is associated with improved food security. Households engaging more frequently and over longer periods are more likely to be food secure. This pattern—where greater exposure leads to stronger outcomes—is known as a dose-response relationship. It indicates that the food club model contributes to building household resilience over time.

Food clubs provide a vital 'more-than-food' intervention. The analysis identifies a powerful 'buffering effect.' While food insecurity is universally damaging to wellbeing, active engagement with a food club demonstrably weakens the corrosive link between hardship and poor physical health or social isolation. This confirms that food clubs function as vital social hubs, repairing the more-than-financial damage of structural precarity.

Leaving the club is a complex sign of progression. The analysis reveals that the most potent predictor of a member leaving is an improvement in their own food security. While some members are 'pushed' away by service limitations that need to be addressed, the overall finding reframes discontinuation. It is not a sign of failure, but a nuanced and often positive outcome, demonstrating the club has successfully fulfilled its purpose as a platform for rebuilding.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report provides compelling evidence that food clubs are a dignified, participatory, and effective model for building household and community resilience. The central recommendation, therefore, is for a strategic policy shift that recognises the reality of structural precarity.

Prevention requires an adequate financial safety net through social security and wages that meet the cost of living. However, for households already navigating the compounding harms of structural precarity, this analysis shows that financial support alone is not enough. An effective response must combine a robust safety net with investment in community-based infrastructure, such as food clubs, which are proven to repair the social and psychological damage of hardship, improve wellbeing, and ultimately build the long-term resilience that enables households to thrive.

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In the preparation of this report, Google's Gemini was used as a collaborative tool. The author provided all foundational analysis, data, initial drafts, and decision making on final text. The AI's role was to assist in refining prose for clarity and tone, structuring complex arguments, and ensuring a logical narrative flow. The final analysis, interpretations, and intellectual ownership of the report remain entirely with the author.

Building Resilience: The Role of Food Clubs in UK Food Security

While the UK as a nation could be considered food secure, household food insecurity is a defining challenge that exposes deep cracks in the structural foundations of our communities. When individuals and households lack the resources to access sufficient, safe, and nutritious food, the effects extend beyond personal health to the resilience of communities. Recent government[1] data indicate the scale of this challenge, with approximately one in five adults experiencing food insecurity, placing the UK among the worst-affected nations in Europe.

People experience food insecurity across a spectrum of severity, from the anxiety of making ends meet to the acute physical experience of hunger. It is crucial to distinguish between a temporary emergency—a short-term shock—and a prolonged, structural crisis, a state of compounding harm that this report will demonstrate is the reality for an increasing number of households. This is not a static condition. Individuals move along this spectrum as their circumstances change and improve. Others may face persistent hardship, keeping them trapped within food insecurity, while still others may move in and out of security. Over time, the experience of food insecurity depletes not only financial and health resources but also social connections and community cohesion, which are necessary for individual and collective wellbeing.

The responses to this growing need also span a spectrum. At one end sit preventative interventions, such as welfare support and free school meals. At the other end is crisis relief, of which the modern food bank has become the most visible form.

Positioned between prevention and crisis relief is the developmental model of the affordable food club[2]. Emerging around 2013-14, this model represents a significant departure from the crisis-driven approach, although it frequently operates from the same community settings as food banks. The distinctions are primarily operational and philosophical. Food banks provide free parcels of predominantly non-perishable food, and access is typically short-term, requires a referral, and is restricted to those in acute crisis. In contrast, food clubs are membership-based, not limited to those currently in crisis, and available for regular use over a longer period. For a low cost, members can receive a wide range of groceries, including fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as chilled and ambient foods. A feature of the model is the integration of 'more-than-food' support, such as debt advice or skills training, to address the underlying drivers of food insecurity. While an increasing number of food banks also provide these wrap-around services, they are foundational to the food

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[1] Food Standards Agency. 2025. Food and You 2: Wave 10 Key Findings Report. https://www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-10 (Date last accessed October 2025).

[2] These organisations are known by various names, including pantries, larders, and social supermarkets. This report uses the term 'affordable food club' as an encompassing term for this model.

club approach, which aims to build long-term household and community resilience with community members.

Despite the growth of this model and the policy debate surrounding an 'exit strategy' from mass dependence on emergency food parcels, there has been no comprehensive, independent analysis of the role and potential impacts of food clubs at scale. This report addresses this critical knowledge gap. This research presents the first large-scale, comparative study of its kind, moving beyond case studies to systematically analyse the circumstances, self-reported impacts, and key wellbeing indicators of food club members compared with a demographically similar group of non-members. The analysis also provides the first systematic comparison of food club users with food bank users.

The report first details the methodology for undertaking this analysis. It then sets the scene by mapping the architecture of hardship that underpins food insecurity in the UK. With this context established, the report examines who uses food clubs and how this model functions as a strategic intervention to help households build resilience, impacting their diet, financial stability, social capital, and wellbeing. The analysis then provides a direct comparison of the different support models. It uses the ‘Food Ladders’—a framework conceptualising a three-rung journey from crisis to transformation—to frame its analysis of the distinct roles of Rung 1 (crisis response) and Rung 2 (capacity building). Finally, the report analyses the different journeys members take away from the food club, before concluding with a summary of key findings, an agenda for future research, and targeted policy implications for the government.

Methodology

This report marks a significant step forward in understanding food club use in the UK by, for the first time, directly comparing the experiences of food club users with a similar group of non-users and food bank users. It also considers the circumstances of those who are using both a food bank and a food club.

The findings are based on a robust, targeted survey of 14,156 adults from lower-income households. This unique comparative design allows the analysis to move beyond simply describing the experiences of service users to directly investigate the distinct differences in key circumstances and indicators—such as food security and wellbeing—between households that use food clubs and those that do not. This provides a new and vital layer of evidence for policymakers, charities, and the food industry.

This section outlines the research methodology used in this study, detailing the rationale, data collection procedures, and analytical approach to establish the robustness and reliability of the research findings, as well as key considerations for their interpretation.

Rationale and Objectives

While government surveys like the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) *Family Resources Survey* and the Food Standards Agency's (FSA) *Food and You 2* survey provide valuable data on food insecurity[3]. Significant evidence gaps remain. The Food and You 2 survey, for example, is not designed for detailed analysis of food support users due to its sample size (typically around 4,000 respondents) and broader focus on consumer food safety. The FSA survey has asked questions about food bank use since its start in 2020, and about food club use occasionally since 2022[4]However, because of the timescale (one year) within the questions, it is not possible to determine the sequencing of food club and food bank use, nor whether people are using both services concurrently. The Family Resources Survey also asks the full suite of food security questions but uses a single monthly reflection period and does not ask further questions about food or diet. Neither survey asks questions about wellbeing. Other research, often conducted by food club providers, offers valuable insights about their own service users, including measures of wellbeing, but typically lacks a comparison group of people who do not use their services.

This study was designed to fill these gaps. Surveying a large, targeted sample of both food club users and a comparable group of non-users enables a direct, robust analysis of the differences between the two groups.

The primary policy-relevant objectives for the study are:

- To measure the degree of food insecurity and its causes among lower-income households.
- To compare food club users and non-users across key measures of food security, cooking confidence, diet quality, and overall wellbeing.
- To analyse the relationship between the use of food clubs and food banks, including the extent of dual usage.
- To identify the main reasons why individuals may stop using food clubs, providing insights for service improvement.

Data Collection and Sampling

This research employed a purposive sampling strategy to reach individuals most likely to be experiencing or at risk of food insecurity. This targeted approach was chosen as a more effective and feasible alternative to a random probability sample. Informed by evidence from the FSA's 'Food and You 2' surveys, the target population was defined as households with a gross annual income below £40,000 residing in the 60% most deprived UK neighbourhoods (IMD quintiles 1-3).

Data were gathered via an online survey conducted by YouGov between May and June 2025, yielding a final sample of 14,156 adults. To ensure enough food club users are included and because there is no complete public register of food clubs in the UK, the survey was targeted at residents of 149 Local Authority Areas, where major food club networks are known to operate. Appendix A lists the included local

[3] For brevity, the term 'food insecure' is used throughout this report to refer to households with low or very low food security. The FSA's Food and You 2 survey, referenced here, uses a validated 10-item scale from the US Department of Agriculture to measure food security.

[4] The FSA Food and You 2 survey uses the term social supermarket.

authorities. Although the survey captured data from users of any food club, not just those affiliated with specific organisations. Due to a very low number of responses, data from Wales and Northern Ireland were excluded from the final analysis, confining the scope to England and Scotland.

There are inherent limitations to this design. As an online survey based on YouGov's opt-in panel, the methodology is susceptible to selection bias and inherently excludes individuals without internet access (coverage bias). These are recognised trade-offs for the scale and targeted nature of the sample achieved.

Survey Content and Design

The questionnaire combined standard YouGov survey items with questions explicitly developed to meet the research objectives. YouGov's standard questions collected demographic and household information, such as age, ethnicity, income, employment status, and household composition and size. These provide the necessary context for understanding the survey population and for statistical analysis. Custom questions were designed to gather detailed information on topics central to this study, including experiences of food insecurity, the use of food clubs and food banks, wellbeing, cooking confidence, and diet quality. There were also specific subsets of questions for food club users, for those who stopped using a food club, and for non-users.

A rigorous process was followed to ensure the questions were of high quality and the data collected were reliable. Wherever possible, questions were used that have been previously validated in other major surveys. For topics where validated questions were not available, items were adapted from provider surveys with a strong track record of consistent responses. A subject matter expert, in collaboration with YouGov, reviewed all questions for clarity and relevance, and the entire survey was pilot tested by YouGov before its full launch. A full list of questions and response options is available in Appendix B.

Approach to Analysis

The analysis in this report uses both descriptive statistics (such as percentages) and advanced statistical modelling to provide a deep understanding of the circumstances surrounding food insecurity and the use of food support. While descriptive statistics offer a helpful overview, statistical modelling allows for a nuanced and more reliable interrogation of the relationships within the data.

This approach enables an examination of the influence of a specific factor (e.g., housing tenure) while simultaneously accounting for the effects of other characteristics, such as income or location. By isolating these variables, the models can identify the strong, underlying associations in the data. This provides more nuanced, evidence-based insights that are better suited to inform effective policy and intervention. Data analysis was conducted using SPSS, a recognised and reliable statistical software package.

Interpreting the Regression Models

Throughout this report, several logistic regression models are used. This section provides a brief, non-technical guide to interpreting their results.

The models are designed to understand the relationships between different household circumstances (e.g., income, health, location) and a specific outcome (e.g., being food insecure, using a food club). The results are presented as Odds Ratios (Exp(B)).

The odds ratio can be understood as a multiplier for risk. To do this, one category of a variable is set as a baseline for comparison, known as the reference group (e.g., for housing, 'homeowners' might be the reference group). All other groups (e.g., 'social renters') are then compared to this baseline. These are known as factors.

- An odds ratio greater than one indicates higher odds of the outcome for that group compared to the reference group. For example, an odds ratio of 1.50 means the odds are 50% higher.
- An odds ratio less than 1 indicates lower odds of the outcome compared to the reference group. For example, an odds ratio of 0.75 means the odds are 25% lower.

Importantly, the reference group should not be interpreted as having no occurrence of the outcome variable; instead, this odds value indicates if the other groups have a greater, lesser or the same amount of risk as the reference group.

The statistical significance ('Sig.') is also reported ($p < .05$). This is a statistical test that indicates whether an observed association is likely to be real or simply due to random chance. These models reveal statistical association, not direct causation. They identify powerful relationships between people's circumstances and their outcomes, but they do not prove that one factor causes another.

Key Methodological Definitions

Beyond the overall modelling strategy, three specific aspects of the analysis require explanation.

- **Measuring Food Insecurity:** This research measured food insecurity using four questions from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food Security Index, with a recall period of three months. Academic studies have consistently found that using a smaller number of USDA questions is a statistically robust and reliable method. Based on their responses, individuals were classified as 'Food Secure', 'Worried', or 'Food Insecure'. For the primary comparative analysis, the 'Food Secure' and 'Worried' categories are combined and compared against the 'Food Insecure' group, a standard practice in this field of research.
- **Ethnicity Grouping:** Some ethnicity categories were combined to allow for statistically reliable analysis where sample sizes for individual groups were small. These groupings, while necessary, combine diverse communities whose experiences may differ.
- **Disability Data:** The YouGov standard questions only asked about disability status if a respondent was not working or unemployed. This means the analysis of disability is restricted to this subset of the population and does not capture the experiences of those with a long-term health condition (LTHC) in work, retirement, or education. To account for this in the regression models, a binary variable was created where respondents who were 'not working due to a long-term health condition' were coded as '1', and all other respondents

(including those in work, retired, or unemployed for different reasons) were coded as '0'. This allows the models to specifically assess the association of being out of work due to ill health, rather than making assumptions about the LTHC status of the broader population.

Further Methodological and Data Considerations

While the research design is robust, three additional considerations inherent to this type of survey research are important for correctly interpreting the findings.

First, the data was collected at a single point in time, providing a detailed 'snapshot' of households in mid-2025. This cross-sectional approach is excellent for identifying strong associations—for example, a link between using a food club and higher self-reported wellbeing. However, it cannot definitively prove causation. Where causation is claimed in this report, it is done only within the statistical bounds of the data (e.g., dose-response inference) and when respondents report outcomes.

Second, the findings are based on individuals' self-reported circumstances. While this is a practical and well-established method, it can be influenced by factors such as a person's ability to accurately remember past events (recall bias) or a potential tendency to provide socially desirable answers. The rigorous question design and validation process mentioned earlier was a key step to minimise these effects.

Third, to illustrate key statistical findings and provide context, the report incorporates quotes from an open-response survey question and case studies from delivery partners. This qualitative data was used to enrich the analysis and was not subject to a separate systematic qualitative analysis. As such, the quotes were not treated as qualitative data for analysis, but instead used much as a photograph or diagram might be used to illustrate key analytical findings.

The Architecture of Hardship: Understanding the Foundations of Precarity

Food insecurity is a persistent reality for a significant portion of the UK population. It is the managed hardship of skipping meals until it becomes routine, and the daily sacrifice many parents make to protect their children from hunger. As two respondents describe:

> ‘I've been poor for so long that I've learned to live on one main meal plus one snack a day. I think most people would class that as ‘skipping’ a meal, but for me that's just normal, and has been for many years now.’ (Non-Food Club User, YouGov survey, 2025)
>
> ‘As the adults in the household, we have decided to eat one small meal per day to ensure our children have enough to eat.’ (Non-food club user, YouGov survey, 2025)

These testimonies reveal profound challenges that go beyond a simple lack of food. The United Nation’s well-established international framework that identifies four pillars of a food-secure life was used to understand these lived experiences in a structured way. These pillars provide a lens through which to analyse the different facets of an individual's or household's experience.

- **Access:** People must have the physical and economic means to obtain appropriate foods in a socially acceptable way. This may be through purchase, own production, gift, or trade.
- **Availability:** A sufficient quantity and quality of food must be reliably available within a person's locality.
- **Utilisation:** This refers to the ability to make good use of food. It requires the knowledge, skills, time, and energy for food provisioning and preparation, adequate facilities for safe storage and cooking, as well as the physical ability to eat food in a culturally appropriate way.
- **Stability:** This pillar demands that the other three are reliable over time, ensuring resilience against sudden shocks, such as job loss or cyclical pressures.

These pillars are not abstract concepts; they are interwoven factors of everyday life. As one respondent eloquently explained, income, knowledge, skills, and local access to fresh produce all interact:

> 'Although I don't have a high income, it is adequate for my needs. I have always cooked and prepared food from scratch and am aware of nutrition but also know how to make tasty food quite cheaply and without too much faff. I put this down to a number of factors - having a mother who cooked, despite being time and money poor, being around family and friends who enjoy good food and know about nutrition. I think it is vital that children are taught at school and learn the pleasure as well as the health benefits of good food. You don't need a lot of money to eat well, but you do need the knowledge and the ability to cook. Also, you need the availability of fresh food near-at-hand.' (Non-food club user, YouGov survey, 2025)

This experience demonstrates the interplay between Access (income), Utilisation (knowledge, skills, and time), and Availability (local access to fresh produce). While financial resources are vital, the capacity to use those resources effectively is equally critical in the respondent's account. It also reflects a widely held belief that a lack of cooking skills is a contributor to other people's food insecurity.

It is now widely recognised that the impact of persistent food insecurity extends far beyond the immediate experience of hunger. A growing body of research shows that the chronic stress, uncertainty, and social stigma associated with food insecurity have significant and damaging consequences. These compounding harms include a measurable toll on both physical and mental health, as well as the erosion of the social connections that are vital for individual and community resilience. The analysis in this report will therefore not only examine the drivers of food insecurity but also its multifaceted impact on the lives of UK households.

This section of the report now turns to the scale of the challenge across the survey group, first by quantifying overall levels of food insecurity, then analysing experiences related to the pillars of *Access*, *Availability*, *Utilisation* and *Stability* in detail. It concludes by modelling how these factors intersect to influence a household's likelihood of experiencing food insecurity. This final model also includes specific demographic variables (gender, ethnicity, and age) to test their association once the variables associated with each pillar are accounted for.

Quantifying Food Insecurity in the Survey Population

Drawing on the questions and using the approach described in the methods section to determine food insecurity, the findings reflect that in the three months before the survey, more than one in five (21.8%) experienced worry about having enough food and/or are actively food insecure (See Table 1).

Table 1: Over One in Five Respondents Face Food Insecurity

Food Security Status	N=14156
Food secure	78.2%
Worried	6.0%
Food insecure	15.8%

Critically, the data reveal a substantial group living in severe hardship: 66% of those who are food insecure reported feeling hunger because they could not afford food, and 42.9% indicated skipping meals for a full day, not by choice. These findings reflect the prevalence of the lived experiences of skipping meals described in the testimonies above. To understand the drivers of this insecurity, the analysis now turns to the first of the UN's pillars: the ability to access food.

Access: The ability to afford food

In a commercialised food system, such as that of the UK, access to food is primarily determined by a household's financial resources rather than, for example, their access to land for subsistence farming, as is the case in other parts of the world. This section provides a descriptive overview of the survey population's income and its sources.

While the survey targeted households with annual incomes of up to £40,000, the data reveal a significant concentration of households on very low incomes (See Table 2). For context, the official government poverty line is set at 60% of median household income. According to the latest data from the DWP (for the financial year ending 2024), this threshold is approximately £20,280[5], equating to a weekly household income of around £390 before housing costs. The survey finds that over a quarter of households (25.2%) report an annual income below £15,000, placing them well below this threshold. Furthermore, nearly four in ten (39%) report an income of less than £20,000 per year, a figure that closely aligns with the national poverty line.

The table highlights a stark income disparity between the groups. There is a heavy concentration of food insecure households in the lowest income brackets. Over four in ten (43.7%) of food insecure households report an annual income below £15,000, more than double the proportion of food secure households (21.8%) in the same bracket. This gap persists up to the poverty line: a clear majority (57.3%) of the food

[5] Department for Work and Pensions, *Households Below Average Income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2024*, published March 2025. https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2024/households-below-average-income-an-analysis-of-the-uk-income-distribution-fye-1995-to-fye-2024 (last accessed 5/10/25). Median Household Income before housing costs in 2024 was £650.

insecure group earns less than £20,000, compared to just over a third (35.7%) of the food secure group.

Table 2: Household Income and Income Sources of Survey Respondents

Financial indicators	Overall	Food Secure	Food Insecure
Gross Household Income			
Under £5,000 per year	3.6%	2.4%	9.9%
£5000-£9,999	6.0%	4.7%	13.2%
£10,000-£14,999	15.6%	14.7%	20.6%
£15,000-£19,999	13.8%	13.9%	13.6%
£20,000-£24,999	17.2%	17.6%	14.9%
£25,000-£29,999	17.3%	18.0%	13.3%
£30,000-£34,999	15.2%	16.4%	8.8%
£35,000-£39,999	11.3%	12.4%	5.6%
Income source			
Employment earnings only	27.5%	27.6%	27.3%
Employment earnings and benefits	17.5%	16.0%	23.1%
Benefits only	11.6%	8.2%	29.8%
Pension only	33.8%	37.8%	12.5%
Other (e.g., Pension and earnings, other sources)	9.9%	10.4%	7.4%

However, while low income is a powerful risk factor, it is not a definitive cause. Not all low-income households are food insecure, and a substantial minority of food secure households also fall within the lowest income bands. This indicates that food insecurity is not reducible to income alone. If it were, we would expect all households below a certain income threshold to experience food insecurity. Instead, the data point to a more complex picture in which income interacts with other forms of vulnerability — such as housing costs, health status, social support, and financial resilience — to shape a household's capacity to cope.

One important layer of this complexity lies in the source of income. Households with similar income levels may face very different levels of pressure depending on whether their income comes from benefits, pensions, or employment. The data show that food insecurity is significantly higher among households reliant on state support. Nearly a third (29.8%) of all food insecure households rely solely on benefits, a rate over 3.6 times higher than that found in the food secure group (8.2%). In contrast, households reliant only on a pension are disproportionately food secure. This group makes up 37.8% of the food secure population but only 12.5% of the food insecure population, underscoring the different financial pressures faced by households reliant on benefits versus those on pensions.

The findings also show a significant reliance on state support. Nearly a third of all households (29.1%) receive benefits, either as their sole source of income (11.6%) or as a supplement to employment earnings (17.5%). A similar proportion of households (33.8%) is reliant on pensions. This underscores that for much of the survey population, employment income alone is not the primary means of support.

However, despite not being the majority, the data reveal 'in-work poverty' within the survey population, with just over 27% of those whose incomes are solely from employment earnings indicated as food insecure. This suggests that a full-time wage does not reliably safeguard against financial pressures. The experience of one food club member, a nurse, powerfully illustrates this reality:

> ‘Most people think I should be able to afford things because I am a nurse, but that is far from the truth. TBBT has gone some way into stopping the stress and worrying about where the family's next meal is coming from, more so as the cost of living is so high and I'm constantly living on my credit cards to get by.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)

Table 3 provides a more detailed analysis of the relationship between work status, income source, and the proportion of households in each group whose income falls below the £20,000 poverty line proxy.

Table 3: Proportion below the Poverty Line by Employment Status and Household Income Source

Work status and income source	Group N	% of group below poverty line
Working full-time	3537	11.4%
Working Part-time	2263	42.6%
Relying on earnings only	3899	19.5%
Relying on earnings and benefits	2425	33.6%
Relying on benefits only	1648	78.0%
Relying on pension income only	4781	45.0%
Relying on other combinations and sources of income	1403	37.1%

Table 3 reveals financial precarity across different household types, highlighting the complex relationship between work, state support, and poverty. The table above presents the total number of respondents in each group (N), and the second column shows the percentage of respondents in each group who are below the poverty line. Work status is the individual respondent's, but income source and level are representative of the household.

The data illustrate the reality of in-work poverty. While respondents who work full-time are the least likely to be in a household with income below the poverty line, a notable 11.4% still have household earnings below the £20,000 threshold, confirming that working full-time does not guarantee financial security. The situation is far more precarious for respondents who are part-time workers, where 42.6% are in households earning below the poverty threshold. This relationship with part-time working may reflect for some the high cost of childcare, which was not fully subsidised at the time of the survey, and how childcare costs can restrict working hours and trap households in poverty[6].

This table also underscores the insufficiency of the social safety net. For households supplementing low earnings with benefits, a third (33.6%) remain in poverty. This hardship is particularly severe for those relying solely on state support, with 78.0% living below the poverty line. Furthermore, the data challenge assumptions about security in retirement, revealing that nearly half of households relying only on a pension income (45.0%) also fall below the threshold.

Finally, while the £20,000 benchmark is a useful analytical tool, it has limitations. A single income threshold does not account for the vast differences in household circumstances and unavoidable costs. Factors such as high housing or rental costs, essential travel-to-work expenses, childcare fees, and debt repayments can dramatically reduce a household's actual disposable income. Because the food budget is frequently the most flexible part of a household's expenditure, it is often the first to be cut. Therefore, a household with an income technically above the poverty line may still face significant challenges in affording food if essential non-food costs are high.

Availability: Proximity and Quality of Fresh Produce

A household's ability to eat well is shaped by its local foodscape—the combination of physical proximity to retail and the perceived quality of the produce available. However, this environment is not static; it can shrink dramatically for households with limited transport or mobility, a key feature of structural precarity.

The following quote powerfully illustrates this dynamic. It captures the experience of a household losing access to their 'usual shopping choices'—which other research suggests is often a large-format budget supermarket—and being forced to rely on their only walkable option, a local convenience store.

> 'The nearest food shops are just within 20 minutes by foot, but as I discovered recently when temporarily incapacitated, they offer much less choice compared to my usual shopping choices...' (Non-Food Club, YouGov, 2025)

This experience highlights a crucial structural barrier. The issue described is not a commentary on any single retailer's specific pricing strategy, but a demonstration of how a sudden lack of mobility can trap a household in a smaller, and potentially more expensive food environment, severely constraining their ability to manage a

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[6] There is an extensive literature on mother's part-time employment as a household strategy to manage childcare costs. See for example: Lyonette, C. (2015). Part-time work, work–life balance and gender equality. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, *37*(3), 321–333. https://doi.org/10.1080/09649069.2015.1081225, Cory, G. and Stirling, A. 2015. A comparative analysis of Maternal Breadwinning in Great Britian and Germany. http://uk.fes.de/fileadmin/user_upload/publications/files/Paper-whos-breadwinning.pdf.

tight budget. It shows how the foundations of a household's security can be compromised not just by a lack of money, but by a lack of access.

The Proximity Gap: Availability of Fruits and Vegetables

The survey asked respondents if a shop selling fresh produce was available within a 20-minute walk (Table 4). The results show that for more than one in ten respondents (10.6%), the local foodscape is characterised by a lack of nearby commercial access to fruits and vegetables. This proximity gap is unevenly distributed, with the data revealing clear geographical divides and notable patterns in housing and deprivation.

A distinct pattern emerges when considering deprivation. Respondents in the most deprived areas (IMD 1) report better commercial access (6.8% lacking a store) than those in the less deprived areas (IMD 3: 15.2%). This indicates that within this survey group, food availability is not solely a function of deprivation but is intricately linked to the geography of housing and retail. Denser, lower-income urban areas appear to be better served by shops than more residential areas in slightly higher income quintiles.

The most significant finding, however, is the stark urban-rural divide. Over half (52.5%) of all rural respondents report having no access to a fruit and vegetable shop within a 20-minute walk. This points to a significant gap in retail provision for households in rural areas.

These numbers, however, only tell part of the story. For many, a 20-minute walk is not a trivial distance but a significant obstacle. This measure of physical presence does not account for the real-world barriers that can make fresh food effectively unavailable, including mobility challenges, the difficulty of carrying heavy shopping, and the prohibitive cost of transport.

> ‘Because we are both disabled and can't drive, we have no other choice but to shop the majority of our groceries online... Nowadays, if I buy the same things, I easily overshoot £50 and now spend around £70 weekly.’ (Non-Food Club, YouGov, 2025)

This testimony crystallises the issue: even when a shop is technically present, intersecting challenges related to health, income, and infrastructure can place healthy food out of reach.

A binomial logistic regression analysis (Table 5) helps reveal these distinct geographical patterns. After controlling for all factors, the model clarifies the structural processes that produce uneven foodscapes for the survey population. The findings can be understood through four key insights:

Firstly, the data reveal a steep availability gradient. Controlling for both region and deprivation, respondents in Rural areas are over 14 times more likely (a 1,333% increase in odds) to lack nearby access to fresh produce than their urban counterparts. This effect is so significant that it eclipses all other factors. For respondents in Town and Fringe areas, the odds of lacking access are still over 50% higher than in urban centres. This suggests a structural issue in the social and market fabric of rural areas, as another respondent expressed:

‘Access in rural areas is a key problem. 'Village life' or a 'country way of life' is not all it's cracked up to be. Being financially very poor and a lack of access just do not help.’ (Non-Food Club user, YouGov 2025)

Table 4: Proportion of Respondents Lacking Nearby Access to Fresh Produce by Geographical and Housing Factors

Geographical and spatial variable	% Without access
All people	10.6%
Regions	
London (n=784)	3.2%
Other English (n=12,932)	11.3%
Scotland (n-405)	4.9%
Deprivation (quintiles 1-3)	
IMD 1 most deprived (n=5240)	6.8%
IMD 2 (n=4725)	10.9%
IMD 3 (n=4191)	15.2%
Population concentration	
Urban (n=11,777)	6.5%
Town and fringe (n=1172)	10.3%
Rural (n=1174)	52.5%
Housing Tenure	
Own home outright	12.6%
Mortgage or Shared ownership	9.6%
Rent - Private Landlord	7.6%
Rent - Local authority or housing association	9.7%
Other	11.5%

Secondly, the data highlight a significant disparity between London and other English regions. After accounting for deprivation and urban/rural status, respondents in the English areas outside London are 2.25 times more likely (a 125% increase in odds) to lack access than Londoners.

Table 5: Regression Model of Factors Associated with Proximity to Shops Selling Fresh Produce

Factors	Exp(B)	% Odds	Sig.
Region (Reference group: London)			
Other English Regions	2.257	125.7%	<.001**
Scotland	1.547	NS	.158
IMD (Reference group: IMD quintile 3)			
IMD 1	.843	-15.7%	.036*
IMD 2	.947	NS	.452
Urban-Rural (Reference group: Urban)			
Town and fringe	1.507	50.7%	<.001**
Rural	14.337	1333.7%	<.001**
Housing Tenure (Reference group: Own outright			
Mortgage or shared ownership	.983	NS	.983
Rent - Private Landlord	.705	-29.5%	<.001
Rent - Local authority or housing association	1.156	NS	.083
Other	1.091	NS	.539

*Significant at p<.05, 95% confidence. **Significant at p<.01, 99% confidence.

A third key finding is that housing tenure also contributes to the production of these uneven foodscapes. Private renters are nearly 30% less likely to experience a lack of availability than homeowners, likely because private rental properties are often more concentrated in central, higher-density urban areas with more developed retail infrastructure. However, while they may be close to food shops, this does not necessarily mean they can afford to buy food.

Finally, this analysis confirms a counter-intuitive finding: once geography (urban/rural) is accounted for, neighbourhood deprivation is not a significant predictor of the physical availability of a shop for survey respondents. The phenomenon often described as a ‘food desert’ appears in this context to be driven primarily by geography and infrastructure, not by deprivation alone.

Technical Note on the Proximity Model

This model used 'fruit and vegetables within a 20-minute walk' as the dependent variable. The dependent variable was coded such that 'Yes, there is' an outlet was zero, and 'No, there isn't' was one. Therefore, an Odds Ratio (Exp(B)) greater than one signifies an increased likelihood of lacking nearby access. Only forty-one cases were excluded from the model, indicating a very complete data set (albeit excluding Wales and Northern Ireland). The model demonstrates a significant ability to predict the likelihood of lacking nearby fruit and vegetable access (Chi-Square = 1545.050, df = 10, Sig. <.001).

Furthermore, the Homer-Lameshow tests demonstrate improved model fit (p=.650), indicating that the model's predictions are now more closely aligned with the actual data distribution. The model predicts about 21% (Nagerlkerke R Square = .211) of the variance in the lack of availability of fruits and vegetables within a twenty-minute walk. While the model correctly predicts 90.0% of cases overall, it is powerful at identifying areas with available outlets (96.5% correct). However, its ability to identify all areas without available outlets is lower (35.0% accurate). Thus, while the model captures the major drivers of low availability, areas of poor access (often described as 'food deserts') remain complex and can also be created by highly local, unmeasured factors.

The Quality Gap: Perceptions of Fruits and Vegetables

Even when fruits and vegetables are commercially available, their perceived quality can influence purchasing decisions. Overall, perceptions of quality among respondents were positive, with a majority (88%) rating the quality of produce where they usually shop as 'Good' or 'Very Good'. However, this masks significant variations (see Table 6).

While overall negative perceptions are low, approximately 8% of all respondents rate quality as 'Poor' or 'Very Poor,' indicating that for a notable segment, quality remains a barrier. This translates to over 1,000 households in the survey facing substandard options. A further 4.3% (approximately 600 respondents) indicated that they either do not buy fruit and vegetables, do not know about the quality, or that none are available where they shop. An ordinal regression model was used to determine what drives perceptions of lower quality.

Table 6: Perceived Quality of Fresh Produce at Usual Shopping Location

Quality Rating	
N	14156
Very good	25.8%
Good	61.8%
Poor	7.0%
Very Poor	1.1%
No fruit and veg in the shop	.6%
Do not buy	1.9%
Do not know	1.8%

Key Insights from the Quality Model

After controlling for all factors, the model shows how geography and housing status relate to perceptions of fruit and vegetable quality (Table 7).

Table 7: Regression Model of Factors Associated with Perceived Quality of Fresh Produce

Factors	Estimate (B)	Odds ratio (Exp(B))	% Odds	Sig.
Region (Reference group: London)				
Other English Regions	-.304	.738	-26.2%	<.001**
Scotland	-.280	.756	-24.4%	.029*
IMD (Reference group: IMD quintile 3)				
IMD 1	-.020	NS		.650
IMD 2	.034	NS		.450
Urban-Rural (Reference group: Urban)				
Town and fringe	-.046	NS		.481
Rural	-.224	.799	-20.1%	<.001**
Housing Tenure (Reference group: Own outright				
Mortgage or shared ownership	-.259	.772	-22.8%	<.001**
Rent - Private Landlord	-.160	.852	-14.8%	.002**
Rent - Local authority or housing association	-.280	.756	-24.4%	<.001**
Other	-.530	.589	-41.1%	<.001

*Significant at p<.05, 95% confidence. **Significant at p<.01, 99% confidence.

The analysis reveals that a household's location, more than the deprivation level of its neighbourhood, is a significant predictor of the perceived quality of available produce. A clear geographical hierarchy emerges from the data. Even after controlling for the urban-rural divide, a distinct disadvantage persists for those living in English regions outside the capital, who are 26.2% less likely to report higher-quality produce than Londoners. A similar pattern is evident for respondents in rural areas (-20.1%). It is notable that a perceived quality gap also persists for respondents in Scotland (-24.4%). While the primarily urban nature of the Scottish sample explains why their physical proximity was comparable to London, this finding indicates that the quality of produce is perceived as lower.

Housing tenure is also a major factor, independent of neighbourhood deprivation. The model reveals that compared to those who own their homes outright, both social renters (-24.4%) and those with a mortgage (-22.8%) are significantly less likely to rate their local produce highly. The similarity between these two economically distinct groups reinforces that the quality gap is not simply a function of poverty. Instead, it suggests the issue is driven by broader geographical and housing-market dynamics, where both large social housing estates and many newer mortgage-held developments may be under served by high-quality food retail compared to more established, older neighbourhoods.

These odds ratios suggest that multiple disadvantages may compound, potentially creating a more challenging foodscape for certain households. For example, a social renter living outside of London may report lower access to high-quality produce than a homeowner in the capital. While the drivers of this geographical variation require further investigation, several factors may be at play. One hypothesis involves the logistical complexities of the UK food system. Longer transit times to remote areas, combined with the shorter shelf-life of fresh produce, may create inherent pressures on freshness regardless of retail intent. However, these geographical disparities might also be shaped by factors beyond supply chain logistics, such as variations in local store infrastructure (e.g., refrigeration capabilities), differences in consumer expectations across regions, or the availability of competing high-end food outlets which may shift the benchmark for "perceived quality."

Technical Note on the Quality Model

The dependent variable, quality of fruit and vegetables at their usual shopping location, is ordered such that higher values represent better perceived quality. Consequently, a negative estimate for a predictor indicates a decreased likelihood of a higher perceived quality rating. There are 13,513 responses in the model. The predictors included provide a statistically significant (Chi-Square = 90.175, df = 10, Sig. <.001) improvement in predicting fruit and vegetable quality compared to a model with no predictors. However, the Goodness-of-fit tests suggest a less-than-ideal fit, which is common and means that unmeasured factors (e.g., supermarket chain dominance, local supply chains, personal preferences) also play a role. The Pseudo R-Square value is very low (Nagelkerke = .008), indicating that the geographical variables explain a tiny proportion (0.8%) of the variance. Although the model is statistically significant, its predictive value for variations in perceived quality is limited. The odds ratios (Exp(B)) presented below provide a robust indication of the average influence of each factor.

A Dual Challenge of Availability and Quality

Taken together, the analyses of proximity and quality reveal a dual challenge that shapes the foodscapes of the lower-income households in this study. A quality gap for others compounds a significant availability gap for some. This indicates that for many, household food security is constrained not by individual choices but by the options available to them.

This trend suggests a potential feedback loop that warrants further scrutiny. In areas where perceived quality is lower, household purchasing patterns may shift toward more shelf-stable, cost-effective options. This shift in local demand can, in turn, influence the commercial viability of stocking high volumes of highly perishable goods, as retailers must manage the risk of food waste in lower-turnover environments. While this cycle is not necessarily a result of intentional prioritisation by providers, it highlights the complex relationship between consumer behaviour and retail logistics. Addressing these disparities may require collaborative efforts to support both consistent supply and stable demand in underserved communities, ensuring that high-quality fresh produce remains a viable option for all households.

The challenge is most acute among rural respondents in the survey, who report the least physical access and significantly lower perceived quality. It is a notable paradox that respondents report the regions central to the UK's food production to be so poorly served. The evidence points to a food system that is geographically concentrated, with London appearing to function as a hub with higher levels of both availability and quality.

This presents a significant logistical challenge but also a clear opportunity. Innovative approaches to supply chain management and retail provision are needed to ensure that a household's postcode does not determine its ability to eat well. Addressing these structural gaps in the food distribution network represents an opportunity for retailers, policymakers, and community partners to collaborate on creating a more equitable and resilient food system for the entire country.

Food Utilisation: Skills, Confidence and Capacity

The pillar of *Utilisation* shifts the focus from the availability of food in a place to a household's capacity to make good use of it. This capacity is enacted in everyday life and is shaped by a range of social and material realities, including a person's skills and knowledge, as well as the time, tools, and physical and mental energy they have available. A common narrative suggests that a lack of cooking skills partly drives food insecurity. However, the survey data reveal a more complex picture.

Self-Reported Cooking Confidence

The survey explored the relationship between self-reported cooking confidence and food security status. The data challenges the common stereotype that food insecurity results from a lack of cooking skills and instead reveals a more complex pattern. The food-insecure group shows greater polarisation in confidence levels, with slightly more respondents reporting both very high and very low confidence compared to the food-secure group (Table 8).

This pattern — where cooking confidence is high even among food-insecure households — illustrates what we might call a *‘cooking skills paradox’*: cooking ability is not absent, but often reflects the resourcefulness required to manage under pressure. A higher proportion of food-insecure respondents rate their skills as 'very good' (19.1%) than food-secure respondents (15.9%), while a larger share also report 'poor' or 'very poor' skills (11.2% vs. 9.5%).

Despite the greater spread at the lower end, the key finding remains: the majority of food-insecure individuals report average to very good cooking skills. This suggests that cooking ability is frequently a coping mechanism rather than a missing competency — and thus, not the primary barrier to food security.

Table 8: Self-Reported Cooking Confidence by Food Security Status

How would you rate your cooking skills?	Overall	Food Secure	Food Insecure
N	14156	11914	2242
Very good	16.4%	15.9%	19.1%
Good	38.6%	38.9%	37.1%
Average	35.3%	35.8%	32.6%
Poor	7.5%	7.4%	8.3%
Very Poor	2.2%	2.1%	2.9%

Confidence levels also vary significantly by gender. As Table 9 shows, women are much more likely than men to report 'good' or 'very good' cooking skills, while men are disproportionately represented among those with low confidence. This further highlights the limitations of broad-brush assumptions about who needs support and what kind.

Table 9: Self-Reported Cooking Confidence by Gender

How would you rate your cooking skills?	Male	Female
N	6144	8012
Very good	13.7%	18.5%
Good	35.2%	41.2%
Average	37.5%	33.5%
Poor	10.3%	5.4%
Very Poor	3.3%	1.4%

This is not to dismiss the potential value of cooking-related activities. For the minority of respondents — particularly men — who report low confidence, targeted support could be beneficial. More broadly, cooking initiatives offer much more than skills development. When framed positively, they provide social connection, boost confidence, and expose participants to new foods and techniques, regardless of starting skill level. Even highly capable cooks can benefit from these spaces. The opportunity for community-based cooking initiatives lies not in ‘teaching the poor to cook’ but in creating inclusive, dignified environments that celebrate food and support wellbeing for all.

Beyond Skills: Other Barriers to Utilisation

As noted, cooking skills are only one component of food utilisation. Practical barriers can prevent even the most competent cook from preparing a meal from scratch. The survey data point to a range of constraints related to health, time, and social and material circumstances that impact a household's capacity to utilise food. The data in Table 10 powerfully illustrate that these barriers are not evenly distributed.

Except for ‘living alone’, the prevalence of the indicators is dramatically higher among the food-insecure population. Those experiencing food insecurity are almost three times as likely to report low mental health (39.2% vs 13.2%) and twice as likely to report low physical health (36.4% vs 18.1%) compared to their food-secure counterparts.

Similarly, structural constraints are far more common among the food-insecure group. They are more than three and a half times as likely to be unable to work due to a long-term health condition (20.2% vs 5.6%). Time poverty is also a greater issue, with a significantly higher proportion having full-time caring responsibilities (22.6% vs 12.7%).

Table 10: Self-Reported Barriers to Home Cooking (Excluding Cost of Food)

	Overall	Food Secure	Food Insecure
Mental health rating (self-score of 0-3 on a scale of 0-10)	17.3%	13.2%	39.2%
Live alone	40%	40.6%	36.5%
Physical health rating (self-score of 0-3 on a scale of 0-10)	21.0%	18.1%	36.4%
Not working because of a long-term health condition (LTHC)	7.9%	5.6%	20.2%
Full-time caring responsibility for someone with a long-term health condition or disability	14.3%	12.7%	22.6%
Lives in private rental housing	17.0%	15.1%	27.4%
Lives in social housing	20.1%	16.9%	37.0%

Finally, housing tenure itself can act as a proxy for another significant barrier: the quality of kitchen facilities. As the table shows, those who are food insecure are much more likely to live in social housing (37.0% vs 16.9%) or private rental accommodation (27.4% vs 15.1%). A lack of adequate tools—such as freezer space, sufficient counter space, or efficient appliances that minimise energy costs—directly constrains a household's ability to utilise food effectively, regardless of their cooking confidence.

Utilisation as a Matter of Capacity

In summary, the analysis of variables associated with the *Utilisation* pillar demonstrates that a household's capacity to prepare healthy meals is shaped less by a deficit in cooking skills than by broader structural, personal, and material constraints. For the majority of the food-insecure population, who report high levels of cooking confidence, the primary barriers are the practical realities of poor health, time poverty due to caring responsibilities, and the structural constraints imposed by their housing situation. For the sizeable proportion of this group living in social or private rental accommodation, this includes the material limitations of poorly equipped kitchens, which directly impede the ability to store and prepare food. This has significant implications for intervention. It suggests that while targeted skills training has a role, a more effective approach to improving food utilisation would focus on alleviating the pressures that deplete a household's capacity: addressing the cost of energy, supporting carers, tackling the links between poor health and food insecurity, and exploring the role of housing standards in enabling healthy eating.

Stability: Resilience to Shocks

The pillar of *Stability* refers to a household's confidence that they will continue to have access to food in the future. In the UK context, this is best understood as resilience—the ability to withstand sudden shocks without falling into a food crisis. This section explores two key survey indicators of resilience: immediate financial capacity and social support networks.

Financial Resilience

The ability to handle an unexpected expense is a clear indicator of a household's financial stability. The findings in this area reveal a profound lack of resilience among the food-insecure population (Table 11).

Table 11: Indicators of Financial and Social Resilience by Food Security Status

	Overall	Food Secure	Food Insecure
Can not afford an unexpected expense of £100 without borrowing	27.1%	18.4%	73.3%
Cannot afford an unexpected expense of £20 without borrowing	11.4%	5.1%	45.0%
Does not feel supported by others in life (self-score of 0-3 on a scale of 0-10)	14.6%	11.8%	29.4%

The data show that, while just over one in four (27.1%) of all respondents could not afford an unexpected but necessary £100 expense, this figure rises to nearly three-quarters (73.3%) among the food-insecure group. The lack of even a minimal financial safety net is starker still: those experiencing food insecurity are almost nine times more likely than their food-secure counterparts (45.0% vs 5.1%) to be unable to manage a minor, unexpected expense of just £20. This lack of a financial buffer means that, for a considerable proportion of the food-insecure population, a small, unforeseen event, such as a broken appliance or a child's school trip, can trigger an emergency.

Social Support

Beyond financial resources, social networks can provide a vital buffer against hardship. Feeling supported by family, friends, and the wider community can offer the practical and emotional resources needed to navigate difficult periods.

The survey data indicate a significant gap in this form of resilience as well. Respondents experiencing food insecurity are more than twice as likely (29.4% vs 11.8%) to report low levels of social support in their lives. This suggests that financial precarity is often compounded by social isolation, leaving households with fewer informal sources of support to turn to in an emergency.

Summary: A Landscape of Low Resilience

In summary, the *Stability* pillar analysis reveals a profound deficit in resilience among the food-insecure population. These households are not only dealing with the immediate pressures of insufficient income, limited access to quality food, and other barriers to utilisation, but also with almost no financial or social safety net. This lack of stability means they are perpetually vulnerable to shocks, where even a minor, everyday disruption can push them from a state of managed hardship into an acute food crisis.

Bringing the Pillars Together: A Predictive Model of Food Insecurity

The preceding sections have examined the individual pillars that underpin a food-secure life. To understand their combined importance and the relative influence of each factor, a hierarchical logistic regression model was developed. This model allows for an assessment of how these different circumstances intersect to produce the risk of food insecurity.

The analysis was conducted in two steps:

- **Step 1 (Circumstances):** A baseline model was created using all the variables related to the four pillars (Access, Stability, Availability, Utilisation). These were entered as a single block because many factors, such as housing, are multifaceted and simultaneously influence a household's capacity across several pillars. This first step models the structural and material conditions that shape people's lives.
- **Step 2 (Demographics):** A second block was added to include demographic variables (Gender, Age, Ethnicity, and Presence of Children). Entering these variables separately allows us to determine whether these characteristics have an additional, independent association with food insecurity after all the circumstantial factors have been accounted for.

The results of this analysis are clear: it is people’s circumstances, not their demographic characteristics, that overwhelmingly explain the likelihood of them being food insecure. The Step 1 model, containing only the circumstantial variables, explained 40.4% of the variance between the food-secure and food-insecure groups. Adding the demographic variables in Step 2 increased the model's explanatory power by only 1.2%. While certain demographic groups face a higher risk, this model suggests that this is not due to inherent demographic factors but rather to their greater likelihood of exposure to the adverse circumstances captured in Step 1.

Key Insights from the Food Insecurity Model

The power of this model lies in its ability to show the odds of association between different circumstances and food insecurity, while holding all other factors constant. It is essential to be clear that this analysis reveals association, not causation. The goal is to understand the factors associated with food insecurity and identify the structural weaknesses that contribute to it (Figure 1, full analysis available in appendix C). Figure 1 offers a visualization of the results. Factors positioned to the right of the central vertical line indicate an increased likelihood of food insecurity, whereas those to the left indicate a reduced likelihood.

Seven key insights can be drawn from these results, grouped into three broad themes: the dynamics of financial precarity, the compounding role of circumstances and place, and the foundations of household resilience.

Theme A. The Dynamics of Financial Precarity

Insight 1: Addressing Cracks in the Foundation, Not Just Patching the Walls

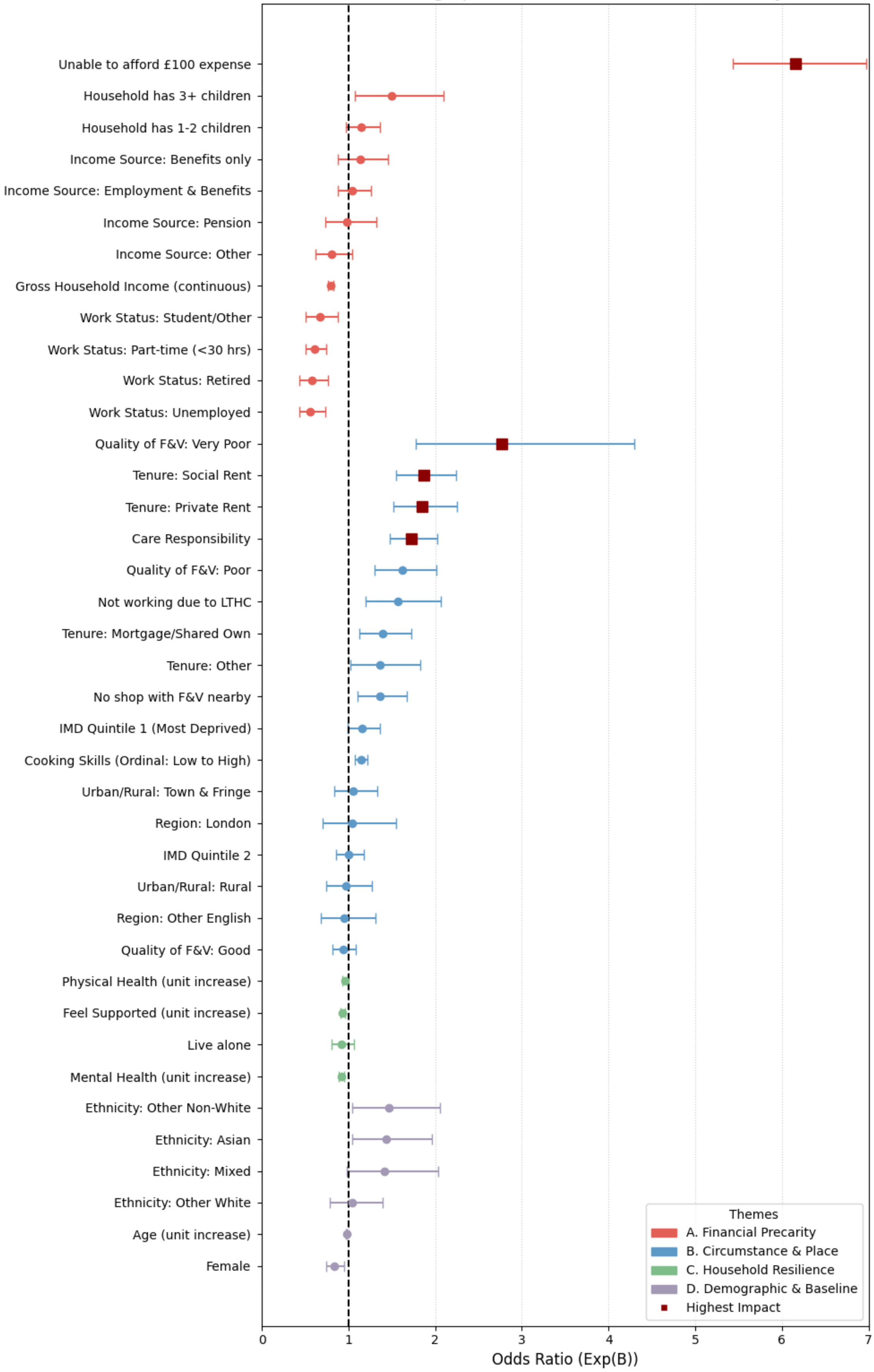
The model reveals that financial precarity is powerfully associated with food insecurity. The single strongest associated factor is the inability to afford an unexpected £100 expense, which corresponds with over six times the odds of experiencing food insecurity. This highlights the acute crisis households face when their resources are insufficient. However, this finding should not be interpreted as an argument for purely reactive, cash-first interventions. To use a building analogy, it would be like patching cracks in the walls with plaster; it provides a temporary cosmetic fix but does nothing to address the unstable foundations that caused the cracks in the first place.

The model suggests a fundamental mismatch between household income and non-negotiable costs. This is evidenced by a 50.5% increase in the odds of food insecurity for households with three or more children—a pressure exacerbated by the two-child benefit cap in place during this study. While this cap has since been lifted, the data underscores how structural income constraints compromise household resilience. A durable solution requires strengthening long-term financial foundations rather than relying on temporary interventions.

Insight 2: The Need for an Adequate and Stable Income

A further, crucial insight concerns the relationship between income, work, and food insecurity. After accounting for the actual level of household income, the model shows that the source of that income (e.g., employment, benefits, pension) is not a statistically significant factor. This indicates that the adequacy and stability of a household's total income, rather than how it is received, are the key factors in this analysis.

Figure 1. Multivariable Logistic Regression Analysis of the Financial, Structur and Demographic Determinants of Food Insecurity.



This finding directly addresses the reality of in-work poverty. The descriptive data show that 5.3% of food-insecure households in this survey have an income between £35,000 and £39,999 (Table 2). The model clarifies the relationship. The core issue is not whether a person is in work, but whether their total income, from any source, is sufficient and reliable enough to build long-term resilience.

Insight 3: The Widespread Nature of Foundational Weakness

While the model shows that higher income is associated with lower odds of food insecurity, a closer look at financial resilience reveals a landscape of widespread precarity—a foundational weakness—that extends well beyond the lowest earners. The link between low income and low resilience is clear: over half of all households earning less than £10,000 a year cannot afford an unexpected £100 expense.

However, this lack of a financial safety net is not confined to the lowest income bands. Strikingly, 16.3% of households in the survey's highest income band (£35,000-£39,999) still lack this basic level of financial resilience. This finding reinforces the conclusion that gross household income is an insufficient measure of financial stability. For many, even a relatively high income is fully absorbed by fixed costs, leaving no buffer for the unexpected and making them vulnerable to food insecurity.

Theme B. The Compounding Role of Circumstance and Place

Insight 4: Resilience is More Than Money

While financial stability is paramount, the model indicates that a household's overall resilience—the structural integrity of its foundations—is multifaceted. The other pillars are also significantly implicated, and a household facing multiple disadvantages faces a compounded risk.

The analysis reveals how structural and personal constraints are associated with significantly higher odds of experiencing food insecurity. Compared to homeowners, the odds are substantially higher for those living in social housing (86.9% higher) and the private rental sector (85.6% higher). Similarly, having a full-time caring responsibility is associated with a 73.6% increase in the odds of experiencing food insecurity.

In this context, the role of cooking confidence is complex. The finding that all other skill levels are associated with lower odds of food insecurity than the 'very good' reference group suggests that high cooking confidence is a coping mechanism developed out of necessity. The high confidence they report is therefore not a resource that *prevented* their food insecurity, but a skill they were likely forced to acquire *because of* it.

This interpretation is crucial. It reframes high cooking confidence not as a factor that prevents food insecurity, but as an indicator of the adverse circumstances people have had to navigate. However, it is equally important to recognise that food skills are more than just a coping mechanism; they are a profound expression of care, resourcefulness, and agency. In a context where people experiencing food insecurity are often unfairly characterised as lacking these very qualities, acknowledging their culinary competence is a matter of dignity. The ability to create a good meal from limited ingredients is a significant skill that demonstrates a commitment to family wellbeing and adept household management.

This reinforces this report's central argument: the focus must be on the circumstances that create hardship in the first place. It also confirms that interventions should not be based on a simplistic 'skills deficit' model. Instead, adequate support must start by respecting the skills, knowledge, and values people already possess. Initiatives that build social connection and celebrate food in a positive environment are valuable components of a holistic response because they work *with* people, affirming their agency rather than treating them as a problem to be fixed.

Insight 5: The Shifting Ground of Time, Poverty, and Place

The model clarifies how the external environment—the 'ground conditions'—can weaken a household's foundation. The model highlights that a lack of time is a significant factor, with a full-time caring responsibility being associated with a 73.6% increase in the odds of experiencing food insecurity. This 'time poverty' constrains a household's ability to manage its resources effectively.

Similarly, the disadvantages associated with place can be understood as building on 'shifting ground.' The earlier analysis established that certain areas are characterised by poor access and quality. The regression model confirms these specific barriers matter: not having a shop selling fresh produce within a 20-minute walk is associated with a 35.8% increase in the odds of being food insecure. This reinforces the core finding that a household’s vulnerability is profoundly shaped by the stability of the ground on which its foundations rest.

Theme C. The Foundations of Household Resilience

Insight 6: The Factors Associated with Resilience

While the model is powerful at identifying the circumstances associated with a higher risk of food insecurity, it also highlights factors associated with a lower risk. These associations point not to simple solutions, but to the foundational, non-financial conditions that support and sustain household resilience.

The analysis reveals the importance of both personal and social resources. Both better physical and mental health are associated with a statistically significant reduction in the odds of experiencing food insecurity. This is logical, as good health provides the capacity and energy needed to acquire and prepare food. Similarly, the research finds that a strong social fabric is a vital resource; feeling supported by others is associated with a significant decrease in the odds of food insecurity.

Finally, the model shows that age and gender are independently associated with food security. The odds of experiencing food insecurity decrease slightly with age, and in this sample, women have 16.6% lower odds than men. The drivers of this gender difference are likely multifaceted. One potential factor is the documented trend of women taking a leading role in household resource management and budgeting out of necessity; however, this may also reflect a "gendered reporting gap." Research suggests that women, who often act as the primary food managers, may employ extreme coping strategies—such as personal meal skipping—to protect the household’s overall food status, potentially masking the full extent of individual insecurity in these figures. Further research is required to determine whether these odds reflect superior household resilience or the hidden sacrifices of female respondents.

Taken together, these findings do not offer a simple checklist of protective factors. Instead, they paint a holistic picture of a resilient household: one that is supported by good physical and mental health, strong social connections, and the financial stability discussed previously. This reinforces the core argument that a durable response to food insecurity must look beyond emergency toward crisis management and ultimately to the long-term project of building these foundational pillars of individual and community wellbeing.

Insight 7: How Circumstances Combine – Two Scenarios

The model is most powerful when understood not as a list of separate factors, but as a map of how circumstances intersect in people's lives. A household's vulnerability to food insecurity is the net result of these combined forces. The following two scenarios illustrate this dynamic interplay.

Scenario A: Compounded Vulnerability

Consider a woman living with her three children in social housing. She is a full-time carer for one of her children who has a long-term health condition, and she reports low levels of social support and poor mental health.

In this scenario, we see how multiple disadvantages compound. Her social housing tenure is associated with 87% higher odds of food insecurity. Being a full-time carer corresponds with 74% higher odds. Her poor mental health and lack of social support are also significantly associated with a higher likelihood of food insecurity. While one of her demographic characteristics (being female) is, on its own, associated with slightly lower odds, this single factor is entirely overwhelmed by the combined weight of her adverse structural and personal circumstances. Her situation is a clear example of how multiple cracks in a household's foundations can lead to an acute and persistent crisis.

Scenario B: Mitigating Risk Through Resilience

Now consider a different household: a couple living in a private rental flat. Their income is stable and just above the UK average, and they report strong social connections in their community and good physical and mental health.

Here, the household has one significant circumstantial factor associated with higher odds: living in the private rental sector corresponds with 86% higher odds of food insecurity compared to a homeowner. However, this risk is mitigated by several other resilient conditions. Their adequate income, strong social support network, and good health are all powerfully associated with a lower likelihood of food insecurity. This household's foundations are in good condition, making it much better able to withstand the shifting ground of high rental costs without falling into a food crisis.

These two scenarios illustrate the core argument of this report: food insecurity is not the result of a single cause, but rather the outcome of a household's entire ecosystem of circumstances. A durable response, therefore, must be holistic. It must aim not only to address immediate financial hardship but also to build long-term resilience by investing in the foundational pillars of health, social connection, and secure housing.

Technical note about the food insecurity model

The model classifies respondents into 'food insecure' (coded 1) and 'food secure' (coded 0), with a final sample of 12,998 cases. The final model is statistically significant ($\chi^2(40) = 3532.733$, $p < .001$) and accounts for 41.6% of the variance (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .416$). A significant Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($p < .001$) suggests the model is not a perfect fit, which is expected given the complexity of food insecurity and the influence of unmeasured factors.

Conclusion: The Architecture of Hardship and the Blueprint for Resilience

This analysis began by revealing the scale of the challenge: more than one in five households (21.8%) in this survey are living with some form of food-related hardship. The subsequent examination has moved beyond this headline figure to reveal the complex, interlocking system of circumstances that produces this outcome. The findings are clear: food insecurity is not a single problem, but a multi-faceted condition rooted in the interaction between a household's resources and the environment in which it operates.

The pillars of Access and Stability show that while a low income is a foundational issue, the more acute problem is a profound lack of resilience. For a considerable proportion of households, their financial situation is a cracked foundation—constantly vulnerable to the most minor shock, with no structural integrity to absorb the unexpected. This precarity is the defining feature of their financial lives.

Simultaneously, the pillars of Availability and Utilisation reveal that many households must exist on 'shifting ground.' The analysis of the UK's foodscapes shows that a person's postcode can subject them to the dual challenges of poor physical access to shops and lower-quality produce. Internal household pressures compound these external disadvantages. The constraints of time poverty, poor physical and mental health, and the material limitations of inadequate housing all diminish a household's capacity to make good use of the food they can obtain.

The final predictive model makes tangible how these different circumstances combine. It confirms that food insecurity is overwhelmingly a product of circumstance, not character. It is not who people are, but the conditions they are forced to navigate that correspond with the highest risk.

Ultimately, this section has sought to set the scene by painting a holistic picture. It shows that food insecurity is the outcome of a system of disadvantage, where a weak financial foundation is built on the shifting ground of geographical inequality and compounded by the daily realities of poor health, time poverty, and inadequate housing. Understanding this complex architecture of hardship is the essential first step to developing the blueprint for resilience that will be explored in the final section of this report.

The Role of Food Clubs on the ‘Food Ladders’

The previous section mapped the architecture of hardship that underpins food insecurity in the UK. With this structural context established, the analysis now turns to a key and rapidly growing intervention designed to help households navigate this challenging landscape: the affordable food club. While the UK has seen an exponential growth in emergency-led food aid, now estimated to comprise over 2,500 food banks, the food club model has also grown significantly. Estimates suggest there are now at least eight hundred such clubs operating across the UK, representing a distinct and evolving part of the community food sector.

The ‘Food Ladders’—a concept grounded in practice, capabilities, and resilience theory—provides a powerful lens through which to understand the specific role of this model. The ‘Food Ladders’ approach moves beyond seeing food insecurity as a simple problem of individual poverty that can be fixed with a handout. Instead, it focuses on the everyday practices that shape people's lives and the real-world capabilities—the opportunities, abilities, and freedoms—they need to flourish and build resilience by reducing vulnerability to shock. The ‘Food Ladders’ visualises the different rungs, or pathways, people use to get food. The goal of an effective food system is not just to 'catch' people at the bottom rung in an emergency, but to provide stable rungs that allow them to build capacity and, ultimately, shape their own food futures.

Food clubs are a key example of the activities found on Rung 2 of this ladder. A single type of organisation does not define this rung; rather, it is defined by a shared focus on capacity building. It includes a range of initiatives—including food clubs, as well as social eating projects, community kitchens, and cookery lessons—all designed to enhance people's capabilities in relation to food. These activities aim to move beyond emergency support by resolving crises, building the resources people need, and amplifying those they already have to ensure a more secure future. This can include reducing barriers to accessing healthy food, increasing food knowledge, improving health through better diets, building social networks, and boosting the confidence and skills needed to stretch a tight budget and improve financial resilience.

They represent a significant philosophical and operational evolution from the traditional emergency-driven food bank model. The membership-based model is designed to be sustainable, providing continuous access to affordable food for as long as members need, rather than restricting access to a limited number of emergency visits. This approach is intentionally framed as one of ‘doing with’ people, not ‘doing to’ them. It operates on a principle of exchange and reciprocity, affirming agency and providing a non-stigmatising way to put good food on the table. Furthermore, many clubs blur the distinction between volunteers and users by offering opportunities for members to contribute, fostering a sense of community ownership and mutual support.

However, ‘food club’ is not a monolithic term; diverse approaches characterise the model. Some operate as networks, where local, independent organisations run their own clubs, often offering members a selection of food items at a very low fee. Other models are more centrally curated, providing a fixed-price selection of high-value groceries at weekly community hubs. A third approach is the social supermarket model, which operates from a fixed location and allows members to shop for a wide variety of items at discounted prices. The degree of central oversight and standardisation varies, from franchise-like structures to more loosely affiliated networks where local partners have greater autonomy.

A unifying feature across this diverse landscape is the commitment to providing 'more-than-food' support, a core part of the food club philosophy. This aims not just to alleviate the symptom of hunger but to enhance the capabilities of its members and help repair the cracked foundations that lead to hardship. This support is integrated in various ways. Some models have built-in partnerships with financial services, such as savings and loans. Other food clubs host partners, such as Citizens Advice, alongside their food provision or run their own programmes of skills classes and social activities.

Food club members themselves confirm the value of this holistic approach. Testimonies show how the co-location of advice services provides a direct route to addressing the underlying drivers of crisis:

> ‘The Advice Worker at the pantry was amazing and quickly took details in the couple of minutes I had before the school run. Within a few days, I had a call from an Advisor, and yesterday I had a 2-hour appointment to help me with debts. We have now made a good start at sorting it all. Such a relief.’ (Feeding Britain member feedback 2025)

Beyond this practical support, members describe the profound psychological and social impact of the club's welcoming environment. This directly reflects the report's quantitative findings on the model's powerful buffering effect against the stress of hardship. As two members describe, the experience can be "life-changing" and an antidote to the burden of their circumstances:

> ‘I was at my lowest point [...] I am not sure what would have happened to me. They were so patient, and full of empathy and understanding. Truly life-changing service.’ (Feeding Britain member feedback 2025)

> ‘It really is such a great offering for the community, and I am very grateful for everything you do to bring support to us all. Everyone is kind and friendly, and I always leave smiling and feeling uplifted and less burdened.’ (Feeding Britain Member Feedback 2025)

To understand the role and impact of this multifaceted model, beyond these user testimonies, this section now presents a detailed analysis of food club use and users. It begins by establishing the levels of food insecurity among members in comparison to other groups. Following this, the study examines the extent of public awareness of the food club model before exploring patterns of engagement, including the duration and frequency of membership. The section concludes with a statistical model that identifies the key demographic and circumstantial factors associated with food club use.

Reinforcing the Foundations: The Circumstances of Food Club Members

The analysis confirms that food clubs are a critical resource for households navigating the most severe forms of hardship. They are not a service for the 'worried well' but are providing vital support for those whose financial and social foundations are most precarious (Table 12).

Table 12: Food Club Users Experience Disproportionately High Levels of Food Insecurity

Variable/Group	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
% of the food-insecure population	86.6%	13.4%	8.3%	5.1%
% of the worried population	90.7%	9.3%	4.4%	4.8%
N of group	13242	914	459	455
Within group: food insecure	12.6%	30.1%	38.3%	21.8%
Within group: worried	7.9%	11.7%	11.1%	12.3%
Within group: Selected 3 or 4 measures	8.8%	22.9%	29.6%	16.3%

As the data shows, current food club members are three times more likely to be experiencing food insecurity (38.3%) compared to those not using a food club (12.6%). This demonstrates that the model is successfully reaching and providing support for households at the sharpest end of the spectrum. These are households actively seeking a practical way to reinforce their foundations in the face of significant structural disadvantage.

The data for those who have stopped using a food club adds a crucial layer of nuance. This group still experiences food insecurity at a rate (21.8%) significantly higher than that of non-users. This suggests a complex picture. As will be explored in a later section, people stop using food clubs for a variety of reasons; while for some their situation may have improved, for others there may be practical barriers to continued use, the food offered may not meet their needs, or the service itself may no longer be available. The reasons people stop using food clubs and what this means are explored further in a later section of this report.

Taken together, the 'Ever Used' group shows that the food club model has, to date, reached 13.4% of the food-insecure population within this survey. This highlights a critical gap between the proven value of the model for those who engage with it and its overall penetration, raising the question of how much a simple lack of awareness drives this.

The Role of Awareness in Accessing Support

While food clubs are a vital resource for their members, a simple lack of awareness may be a key factor limiting their wider uptake. As one respondent noted, the problem is not a lack of need but a lack of information.

> ‘Communication is lacking, there are many people who are really struggling who simply do not know where to get help from.’ (Non-Food Club user, YouGov survey, 2025)

This ‘knowledge gap’ appears to be a significant element within the broader architecture of hardship, potentially preventing people from accessing a tool that could help them repair their foundations (Table 13). The data reveals the scale of this gap: overall, less than a quarter of all respondents (21.8%) knew what a food club was before it was defined for them. This low recognition is likely because the generic term has not yet entered the public lexicon; media coverage has been localised, and providers themselves use a varied nomenclature such as ‘pantry’, ‘community market’, or ‘social supermarket’.

Table 13: Awareness of Food Clubs Among Users and Non-Users

Knowledge about food clubs	Overall	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
Know what a food club is	21.8%	19.8%	50.9%	58.4%	43.3%

But for those who do not use food clubs, this lack of awareness appears to be a considerable barrier, compounded by the reality that even when people have heard of food clubs, their understanding may be coloured by wider perceptions of food aid. While the food club model is designed to be less stigmatising, the underlying need to seek support can itself be a source of hardship. It is significant, therefore, that once the distinct, membership-based model was explained, over a third of non-users (36.5%) said they would consider using one. The immediate interest this generated during the survey suggests that a lack of clear, accessible information is a significant factor constraining the current reach of the food club model.

> ‘I am very appreciative of the information provided. I did not know about food clubs.’ (Non-Food Club user, YouGov survey, 2025)

> ‘You have opened my eyes to a food club which I might suggest to my friends and loved ones who are struggling.’ (Non-Food Club user, YouGov survey, 2025)

Patterns of Use: A Foundation of Consistent Support

The patterns of engagement among food club members, specifically how long and how often they use the service, reveal the role these clubs play in their lives.

The data on membership duration shows a pattern of sustained, long-term use for a majority of members. As detailed in Table 14, over half of all respondents who have ever used a food club (56.7%) remained members for more than a year. This pattern of long-term engagement is matched by frequent use among current members. Table 15 shows that over half (52%) use their club at least once a week, with a further 28.3% using it multiple times a month.

Taken together, this data on longevity and frequency indicates that for many households, food clubs provide a consistent and important resource that helps to shore up their foundations. They appear to be an integrated part of how households manage their grocery needs, rather than an occasional, emergency service. The variability in use often reflects the club's operational model, from daily-opening social supermarkets to weekly pop-up pantries.

Table 14: Length of Food Club Membership

Food club use	Overall	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
Number of survey respondents	14,156	13,242	914	459	455
Percentage of the sample	100%	93.5%	6.5%	3.2%	3.2%
When the respondent joined the food club					
In the last month			8.6%	11.3%	5.9%
2-3 months ago			11.5%	14.8%	8.1%
4-6 months ago			11.4%	14.4%	8.4%
7-12 months ago			11.8%	15.5%	8.1%
More than 12 months ago			56.7%	44.0%	69.5%

Table 15: Frequency of Use Among Current Food Club Members

Frequency of use by those currently using a food club	Percentage
More than once a week	11.3%
Once a week	40.7%
Less than once a week but more than once a month	28.3%
About once a month	13.5%
Less than once a month	6.1%

The Geography of Support: Distribution and Deprivation

The geographical distribution of food clubs is not random; it is shaped by the history of the organisations that run them, the nature of local partnerships, and the specific community assets available. The analysis of where members live, therefore, provides insight into both the current reach of the model and the structural factors that influence its growth.

Regional Footprint

The regional distribution of users in this survey reflects, in part, the sampling strategy, which targeted local authorities where major food club providers were known to operate. It also reflects the organic growth of these networks. For instance, some models originated in specific cities and have expanded outward from that hub, while others are located near their parent social enterprises. This footprint is also shaped by the uneven landscape of local support, where the willingness of local authorities or community food networks to partner with and champion these models varies across the country.

For these reasons, the data should not be interpreted as a comprehensive map of all food clubs in the UK. It does, however, provide a valuable snapshot of use patterns within these established areas (Table 16).

Table 16: Regional Distribution of Food Club Users Shows Variation in Current vs. Stopped Membership

UK Countries and Regions	Overall	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
England	96.9%	96.1%	96.0%	96.1%	95.8%
North East	11.8%	11.5%	14.9%	14.6%	15.2%
North West	17.8%	17.3%	24.6%	23.1%	26.2%
Yorkshire and the Humber	15.7%	15.8%	14.3%	15.3%	13.4%
East Midlands	6.5%	6.6%	5.1%	5.0%	5.3%
West Midlands	7.1%	7.1%	6.9%	4.8%	9.0%
East of England	8.7%	9.0%	4.8%	5.0%	4.6%
London	5.5%	5.5%	5.5%	7.8%	3.1%
South East	8.9%	8.9%	8.8%	8.7%	8.8%
South West	14.9%	15.1%	11.1%	11.8%	10.3%
Wales	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
Scotland	2.9%	3.7%	3.8%	3.7%	4.0%
Northern Ireland	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%	0.2%

Note: Rounding may mean that regional percentages do not precisely match the England percentage

Of note are the regional variations between current and former members. In the West Midlands, for example, the proportion of those who have stopped using food clubs (9.0%) is almost double that of current users (4.8%). Conversely, London shows a significantly higher proportion of current users (7.8%) compared to former users (3.1%). As a later section of this report will explore, these patterns raise important questions about the different factors influencing engagement, from the stability of a household's circumstances to potential barriers to continued access.

Index of Multiple Deprivation

Food clubs are intentionally designed as a hyper-local, place-based form of support. Unlike some forms of food aid that may be sited based on the convenience of volunteers, food clubs are typically established in areas where a need for support is anticipated—a preventative framing based on the understanding of local conditions. The analysis of where users live in relation to the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) confirms that this strategy is reaching communities where the foundations of household resilience are most likely to be compromised by wider socio-economic challenges.

Table 17: Food Club Use by Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) Quintile

IMD Quintile	Everyone	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
1	37.0%	36.3%	46.9%	47.9%	45.9%
2	33.4%	33.4%	33.6%	33.8%	33.4%
3	29.6%	30.3%	19.5%	18.3%	20.7%

The data shows a clear concentration of use in the most deprived neighbourhoods, with almost half of all current food club members (47.9%) living in the IMD Quintile 1. This indicates that food clubs are successfully providing a key piece of community infrastructure where it is most needed.

However, the earlier analysis in this report suggested that hardship extends well beyond the most deprived areas, with significant need also present in Quintile 3. The data here support that finding, with nearly one in five food club members (18.3%) living in this middle quintile. This demonstrates that food clubs are also a vital resource for households who may not live in the most deprived postcodes but are still experiencing significant financial precarity. Finally, need can also exist in small pockets within less deprived areas (Quintiles 4 and 5), particularly in rural contexts where the geographic scale of IMD calculation can mask localised hardship.

Urban-Rural Distinctions: Navigating access and need

The survey data reflects an under sampling of people living in rural areas (8.3% of respondents, compared to a national average of 18.4%, Table 18). This is likely due to the characteristics of the respondent pool and the survey design, which excluded less deprived areas that can be geographically large in rural contexts. Despite these limitations, a clear pattern emerges regarding food club use.

Table 18: Food Club Use by Urban-Rural Classification

Urban-Rural classification	Everyone	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
Urban	83.4%	83.2%	86.2%	86.5%	85.9%
Town and Fringe	8.3%	8.3%	8.7%	9.4%	7.9%
Rural	8.3%	8.5%	5.2%	4.1%	6.2%

The data shows that food club users are disproportionately concentrated in urban areas (86.2%). This pattern is mainly attributable to the operational model of most food clubs. Many are located within existing community infrastructure, such as community centres or schools, which may be less prevalent or accessible in rural areas. While some mobile food club models exist, the majority operate from fixed locations, creating inherent accessibility barriers for those in more dispersed rural communities who already face challenges with transport and access, as established earlier in this report.

People living in rural areas are notably less likely to be current food club users (4.1%) and slightly more likely to have stopped using a food club (6.2%). This may indicate greater challenges with sustained access for rural households. This geographical pattern highlights a significant disconnect: the food club model, in its current form, is least present in rural communities, where the earlier analysis demonstrated that food insecurity is a significant and growing issue. Bridging this service gap represents a key strategic challenge for the sector.

Summary: The Place-Based Picture

Taken together, this geographical analysis reveals a clear and complex picture. The food club model is successfully reaching its intended demographic: households in deprived, predominantly urban and town-based communities. Its growth is not uniform but is shaped by the specific history of provider networks and the varying landscape of local support. The model's deep roots in the UK's most deprived neighbourhoods show it is a key piece of community infrastructure where foundations are most fragile.

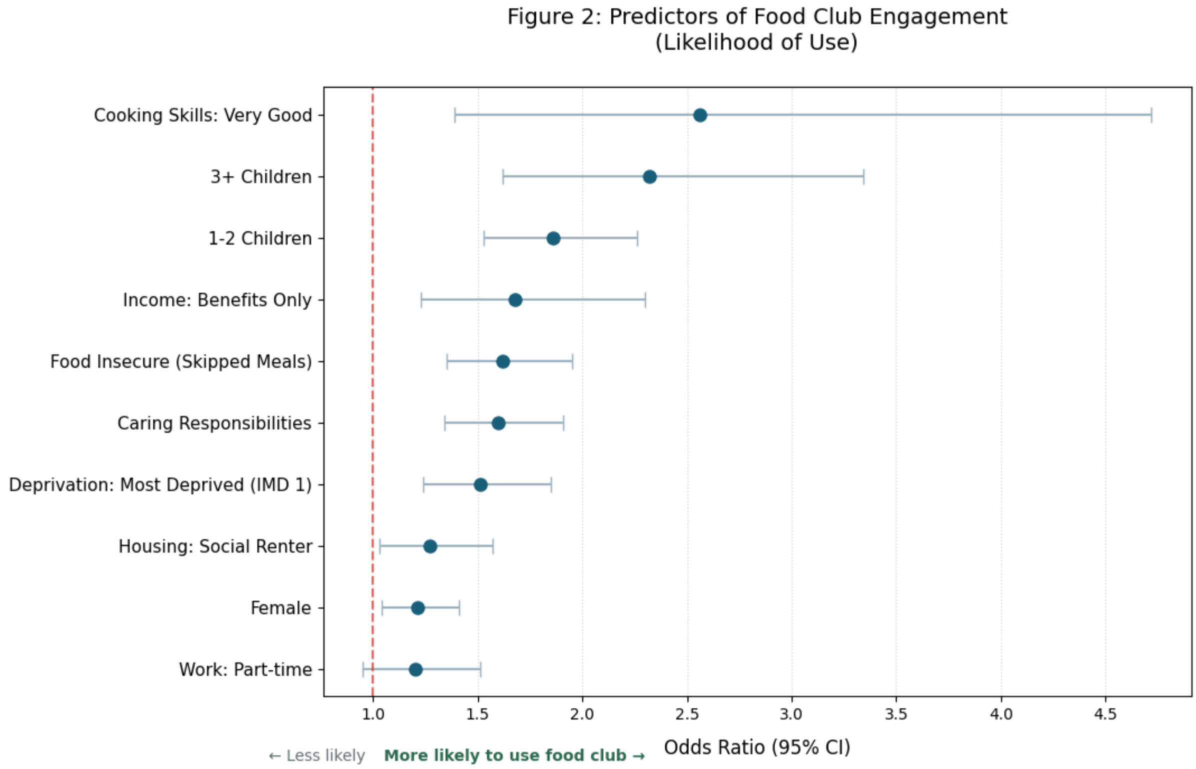
However, the data also reveals a dynamic pattern of engagement, with significant regional and geographical variations in the proportion of members who stop using the service. This highlights that for many, engagement with a food club is not a permanent state, though the reasons for this are varied and complex and will be explored later. This place-based strategy, combined with a tendency to operate from fixed community hubs, has also created a significant disconnect. The current food club footprint leaves a service gap in many rural areas, where the earlier analysis revealed that food insecurity and access challenges are significant and growing problems.

The Architecture of Engagement: A Model of Food Club Use

The analysis has shown that while hardship is widespread, only a minority of households currently engage with food clubs. This engagement gap is likely due to a combination of factors. The data has already shown that a lack of awareness is a significant issue. Furthermore, because food clubs are a hyper-local form of support, a club may exist within a local authority but still be physically inaccessible to residents who live too far away. To understand the circumstances of those who *do* engage, this section uses a logistic regression model to identify the statistical signals that best predict food club use.

The model provides a clear picture of the households most likely to engage with food clubs. However, it is essential to interpret these findings with care. The model identifies statistical associations, not a complete or exclusive profile. Food club members are a broad group, and the model confirms that there is no single 'type' of user. The circumstances detailed below are simply those that correspond with a higher likelihood of using a food club.

The model reveals four key insights into the circumstances most strongly associated with using a food club. The statistical relationships identified by the model are visualized in the Figure 2 below (Data table in Appendix C). In this Forest Plot, markers to the right of the vertical dashed line (Odds Ratio > 1) indicate factors that increase the likelihood of a household using a food club, while the horizontal bars represent the 95% confidence intervals.



Insight 1: Responding to the Pressures of Family, Care, and Gendered Responsibility

The model shows that engagement is strongly associated with the pressures of dependents. The odds of using a food club are 94% higher for households with children, rising to 150% higher for larger families, and are further increased by 58% for those with full-time caring responsibilities for what is likely a child or relative with a long-term health condition. Separate from these factors, the model shows that women have 27% higher odds of using a food club than men. This may reflect the gendered cultural norm where women often carry the ‘mental load’ of managing the household. This responsibility includes not only the practical tasks of day-to-day food provisioning but also the strategic financial planning required to ensure the wellbeing of their families. Finally, the analysis shows that the odds of using a food club decrease slightly with age, further highlighting that these services are a key support for younger households navigating these combined pressures.

Insight 2: The Economic Realities of Use: Time, Precarity, and In-Work Poverty

A household’s economic circumstances are also a key factor. The odds of using a food club are highest for those relying solely on benefits (103% higher odds) and those in part-time work (33% higher odds). This reflects both the profound financial precarity faced by these households and the practical consideration that the operating hours of many clubs may be more accessible to those with greater time flexibility. At the same time, the significant presence of full-time workers among the user base—who make up nearly a quarter of all users (23.3%)—points to a different dynamic. It suggests that the food club model, which is based on membership and exchange, may be a more acceptable and dignified form of support for households who are working but still struggling to make ends meet, and who may be less likely to engage with services framed as emergency aid. This point is explored further later in this report.

Insight 3: An Opportunity Within the Local Food Environment

The analysis confirms that where a household is situated matters. Living in the most deprived neighbourhoods or in social housing is associated with significantly higher odds of using a food club. This reflects a key aspect of the food club model: they are typically established as a hyper-local, place-based response, intentionally sited in areas where need is anticipated. This finding aligns with the earlier analysis, which identified that these same areas could have challenges with the availability and quality of commercial fresh produce. This suggests an opportunity for food clubs to act as a complementary part of the local food ecosystem. By providing reliable access to affordable fresh produce, which they frequently do, they not only address a key need for their members but also help build the foundations for a healthier community.

Insight 4: A Place of Resourcefulness and Skill Exchange

Finally, the model challenges any assumption that food clubs are a deficit-based service. While the data shows an association between higher self-reported cooking skills and food club use, this relationship is not simply linear or predictive. This finding may reflect the gendered nature of household management, where women often develop these resourceful skills out of necessity. Food clubs are also dynamic social spaces where conversations about how to prepare unfamiliar foods are common. This suggests that while members bring considerable skill, the club environment itself can be a place where food knowledge is exchanged, and capabilities are expanded. This aspect will be explored in greater detail in a later section.

Technical Note on the Model

The final model included 12,255 cases and is statistically significant ($\chi^2(34) = 413.933$, $p < .001$), accounting for 10.2% of the variance in food club use (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .102$). In social science research, this represents a meaningful explanation for a complex decision. The model's low predictive power for identifying users (.8%) alongside its high accuracy for identifying non-users (99.9%) indicates that while the model successfully identifies the key circumstances associated with use, the individual decision to join is also influenced by a host of unmeasured factors, such as personal networks or local knowledge. An insignificant Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($p = .119$) indicates a good overall fit.

Conclusion: A Profile of Purposeful Engagement

This section has presented a large-scale, evidence-based profile of food club use and users in the UK. The analysis positions the food club as a Rung 2 activity on the ‘Food Ladders’, a model distinct from emergency-led food aid that is used as a consistent, long-term resource by its members.

The statistical model identifies the circumstances most strongly associated with engagement. Use is highest among households navigating the compounded pressures of family, care, and in-work poverty. The model also identifies that women and younger households are independently more likely to engage with the service. The findings suggest that the membership-based model is an acceptable form of support for a diverse group of users, including a significant number of full-time workers, who are resourceful in managing their household budgets.

Finally, the analysis has identified two key strategic considerations for the future of the food club model. The current place-based strategy of locating clubs in deprived, urban areas has proven highly effective at reaching the intended communities. However, this successful targeting creates an accessibility gap for those outside these specific geographies, particularly in rural areas where need is also significant. Alongside this, a widespread information gap limits engagement even in places where clubs exist. These findings present both a challenge and an opportunity: how to build on the success of the current hyper-local model while innovating to reach underserved populations.

The Impact of Food Clubs: Shoring Up the Foundations of Resilience

Having established a profile of food club users, this section now examines the model's impact on their lives. The evidence shows that food clubs are a key Rung 2 activity on the ‘Food Ladders’, moving beyond simple food provision to repair the cracked foundations that lead to hardship. The analysis is structured around three key areas: the direct impact on financial resilience, the effect on nutrition, and the broader effects on health, well-being, and community connection.

Improving Financial, Nutritional, and Physical Resilience

This first part of the analysis demonstrates how food clubs shore up the most immediate foundations of a household's stability: its finances, diet, and health.

Financial resilience

The data shows that engagement with food clubs has a direct and significant impact on a household's financial foundations (Table 19). Members overwhelmingly confirm the club's role in reinforcing their budgets, with 93.4% stating it helped them stretch their finances and 74.1% reporting they felt less worried about feeding their families. This financial relief translates directly into improved food security, with 72.2% of members reporting they skipped meals less often.

A logistic regression model was developed to understand the dynamic relationship between the intensity of food club engagement and a household's food security status.

The model reveals a clear pattern of use. It indicates that those who have joined most recently have significantly higher odds of being food insecure. Members who joined in the last month have 227% higher odds of being food insecure compared to members who have been with the organisation for more than a year. This suggests that households often join a food club at a point of acute need.

Conversely, the model indicates that less frequent use is associated with greater food security. Those using a club once a month or less have around 66% lower odds of being food insecure compared to those who use it more than once a week.

Table 19: Logistic Regression Model Predicting Food Security Status Based on Engagement

Variable category	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% change in likelihood	Sig.
Frequency of use (reference is More than once a week)			
Once a week	.556	NS	.076
Less than once a week but more than once a month	.547	NS	.081
About once a month	.327	-67.3%	.006**
Less than once a month	.342	-65.8%	.040*
When joined (reference is more than 12 months ago)			
In the last month	3.270	227.0%	<.001**
More than a month ago but less than 3 months	2.355	135.5%	.003**
Between 3 and 6 months ago	1.123	NS	.701
More than 6 months ago but less than a year ago	1.197	NS	.536

*Significant at p <0.05, (95% confidence). **Significant at p <0.01 (99% confidence).

Taken together, these findings support a narrative of positive progression. People appear to join when their financial foundations are most precarious. As the club helps them to reinforce their budget and improve their situation, their pattern of engagement may change, reflecting a successful step up the ‘Food Ladders’ towards greater stability.

Technical Note on the Model

A logistic regression model was used to analyse the association between the duration and frequency of food club use and a household's food security status (0=Food Secure, 1=Food Insecure). The analysis was conducted on a sample of 459 current food club members.

The final model is statistically significant ($\chi^2(8) = 31.110$, $p < .001$) and an insignificant Hosmer-Lemeshow test ($p = .923$) indicates a good overall model fit. The model accounts for 8.8% of the variance in food security status (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .088$). While this may seem low, in social science research, where outcomes are influenced by a multitude of unmeasured social and psychological factors, this represents a meaningful explanation of the relationship between these variables.

The model's overall predictive accuracy is 63.6%. Its ability to correctly identify food-secure households (83.1%) is strong, while its ability to identify food-insecure households is lower (35.3%). This is a common finding in models where one outcome is more prevalent than the other. The primary value of the model is not in predicting individual cases, but in confirming that a statistically significant relationship exists between the patterns of food club engagement and a household's food security status.

Nutritional Resilience and Physical Health

This analysis confirms that food clubs have a significant positive impact on household nutrition by addressing the real barriers to a healthy diet: availability and affordability. As established earlier in this report, the 'architecture of hardship' includes local food environments with poor physical availability of fresh produce, where the primary barrier is often economic. By providing a reliable source of affordable, high-quality food in the communities where people live, food clubs solve both. Table 20 shows how different groups assess their diet quality.

Table 20: Perception of Diet Quality

Variable/Group	Everyone	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
Very healthy	10.3%	10.1%	13.0%	17.2%	8.8%
Fairly healthy	66.9%	67.2%	62.9%	59.0%	66.8%
Fairly unhealthy	20.0%	19.9%	20.5%	20.9%	20.0%
Very unhealthy	2.8%	2.7%	3.6%	2.8%	4.4%

This positive perception is directly linked to the contents of the food club parcels, which introduce variety and provide access to items previously considered a 'luxury'. This changes the family's entire relationship with food, as one member noted:

> ‘I would also never buy fruit or veg as they were too expensive... It has filled my cupboards and allowed me to feed my child a better diet.’

This positive view is supported by consumption data (Table 21).

Active food club members report the highest rate of consuming 5+ portions of fruit and vegetables per day, surpassing all other groups. Conversely, those who have stopped using a food club report the lowest consumption, with only 13.8% achieving the 5-a-day target. This contrast provides evidence that the affordable access to and availability of fresh produce provided by the clubs is directly responsible for increasing people’s capability to have improved nutrition. But this finding also suggests that these gains can be lost if both access and availability support is removed.

Table 21: Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

Fruit and veg consumption	Everyone	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
5+ per day	19.6%	19.8%	17.3%	20.7%	13.8%
2-4 per day	52.7%	52.7%	52.7%	50.8%	54.7%
1 a day	17.7%	17.6%	19.8%	18.3%	21.3%
Less than one a day	10.0%	10.0%	10.2%	10.2%	10.1%

This improved nutrition, in turn, translates into a direct and measurable positive health outcome. A regression analysis confirms that while food insecurity takes a significant toll on physical health (B=-.551, p =<.001), the food club model acts as a powerful protective buffer. For a food-insecure household, using a food club entirely offsets the negative impact of hardship on their self-reported physical health (Interaction B=.633, p =<.001).

Technical Note for the Physical Health Model

A multiple linear regression was conducted to analyse the impact of food club use and food insecurity on self-reported physical health. The model included the same set of demographic and economic controls as the wellbeing and community connection models.

The final model was statistically significant and explained 16.9% of the variance in physical health (Adjusted R^2 = .169). Diagnostic tests confirmed the model's robustness. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were below 2.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue, and analysis of the model's residuals confirmed that key statistical assumptions were met.

The Role of Skill: From Coping Mechanism to Capacity Building

The findings challenge the ‘skills deficit’ narrative, instead revealing a more complex and positive story (Table 22). Food club members report high levels of cooking confidence, suggesting that advanced cooking skills are often a sophisticated coping mechanism for managing a tight budget.

However, the food club environment does more than provide a space for existing skills to be used; it actively enhances them. The clubs are dynamic social spaces where 'food talk'—the sharing of tips and recipes—is an everyday activity. This peer-to-peer exchange allows members to demonstrate their resourcefulness and learn from each other, building confidence and expanding their capabilities. The exposure to new and varied foods is a key part of this process, as members explained:

> ‘As a family, our diet is much healthier. My children look forward to finding out what's in there every week, and it has given us variety, trying foods

we wouldn't normally buy.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)

‘[The food club] has changed how I cook when there is a lot of veg. I make pans of soup and freeze it... I don't waste any food. It has helped with saving money towards my bills.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)

Table 22: Cooking Confidence as a Measure of Self-Reported Cooking Skills

How would you rate your cooking skills?	Everyone	Non-Food Club	Food Club Ever	Food Club Now	Food Club Stopped
Very good	16.4%	15.8%	24.8%	27.0%	24.8%
Good	38.6%	38.6%	38.3%	36.6%	38.3%
Average	35.3%	35.6%	30.4%	30.9%	30.4%
Poor	7.5%	7.7%	5.0%	3.7%	5.0%
Very Poor	2.2%	2.3%	1.4%	1.7%	1.4%

This does not contradict the earlier findings that high cooking skill is a coping mechanism. Instead, it suggests a dynamic process: members bring their highly developed coping skills into the club, where the peer-to-peer exchange and exposure to new ingredients provide a context to refine further and validate those skills, boosting their confidence in their own capabilities.

More Than Food: Rebuilding Social and Psychological Foundations

The analysis proves that food insecurity is more than a lack of money; it is a corrosive force that damages wellbeing and frays the social fabric. The evidence here demonstrates that food clubs have a powerful, holistic impact, acting as an antidote to the isolation of hardship and providing a crucial buffer against its psychological toll. As one survey respondent powerfully stated, a food club ‘provides more than just cheap food.’

The evidence demonstrates that the impact of a food club extends far beyond the food it provides, creating a positive and stabilising social experience for its members. This is not simply a transactional service; it is an integrated part of a household's weekly routine that adds value beyond the budget. A majority of current members (54.2%) report that the food club adds structure to their lives. Furthermore, the experience of attending is overwhelmingly positive, with over 80% of members stating that they enjoy going to their hub (51.0% 'a bit' and 29.2% 'a lot'). This quantitative data provides strong evidence that the food club model fosters a dignified and desirable social environment —a key precondition for rebuilding the psychological and community foundations damaged by hardship.

This is exemplified by food club members like ‘N’, who signed up when it first opened. She and her children live in the tower block from which the food club runs. N visits the food club after her English for Speakers of Other Language (ESOL) classes and says it has been a significant confidence boost, as attending the club has helped her practice and improve her English. N says the food club helps to make her money go further. In addition, the on-site energy advice worker has been able to provide her with a double air fryer to help her save money on her bills. (Feeding Britain Member profile 2025).

An Antidote to Isolation: Fostering Community and Connection

A significant impact of food club use is the strengthening of the social fabric. The data shows that users are more deeply engaged in their communities and feel more connected to others. Current food club users are more than twice as likely to volunteer regularly (23.7%) as non-users (11.1%), and this participation is a direct route to building relationships. As one member confirmed:

> ‘I’ve been volunteering at our hub and have made lots of new friends.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing, annual user survey 2024)

This increased engagement is confirmed by members' direct experiences, with a majority reporting they felt more involved in their community (63.3%), had made new friends (53.7%), and felt less alone (56.2%) since joining. The clubs are clearly hubs of social connection, as members’ testimonies[7] vividly express:

> ‘I have made friends and look forward to meeting up and having a laugh with them.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)
>
> ‘Going to see the ladies and gentlemen of [the food club] gave me a lot of help, and I found friends.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)

This sense of belonging provides the foundation for the deeper impacts on personal wellbeing.

The Net Positive Impact on Wellbeing

To isolate the 'more than food' effect, a series of regression models was run, controlling for pre-existing demographic and economic factors. The analysis confirms that food insecurity has a significant negative impact across every measure, but it also reveals that food clubs have a profound, positive, and protective effect precisely for those experiencing this hardship.

First, the regression model confirms that food clubs rebuild the social fabric. For all members, the club functions as a vital community hub, significantly boosting their sense of local connection (B=.628, p =<.001). This effect is amplified for those experiencing hardship, proving that food clubs actively counteract the isolating effects of food insecurity. As one member explained, the club *‘connected me with my local community and neighbours* (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024).’ Another said:

> ‘It's made me realise I'm not alone. We're all in the Storm … but different boats.’ (The Bread and Butter Thing annual survey, 2024)

[7] The Bread and Butter Thing Annual Member Survey 2024.

Second, this social connection provides the foundation for improved personal wellbeing. While food insecurity significantly harms wellbeing (B=-.897, p =<.001), the analysis reveals a powerful buffering effect. For a household that is food insecure, being a food club member provides a significant positive boost to their wellbeing (Interaction B=.409, p=.004), offsetting nearly half of the negative psychological impact. This journey of rebuilding confidence is illustrated by Alicijia's Experience:

Alicijia seeks support through her weekly food club. She had been struggling with her mental health and lacked confidence. The [Food Club] not only provided her with access to affordable and nutritious food, but also suggested she access the Empowering Conversation sessions. She said:

> 'I found out about the Empowering Conversations sessions and the Proper Job courses through [the food club], without them I wouldn't have known it existed as I'd not seen anything advertised and wouldn't know where to look online. I was apprehensive at first as I have been struggling with my mental health, and as part of that, meeting new people is very stressful for me. TBBT supported me, and everyone at Proper Job was very patient and friendly. The team made me feel comfortable, and since the course, I feel more confident. I can go out more and interact with people better; it's helped me and my family, so I'm very happy I attended. I now have the confidence to start looking for part-time work.' (The Bread and Butter Thing, Empowering Conversations feedback 2025)

Alicijia's story crystallises how the model works in practice. The food club provides not only a safety net but a pathway—connecting members to the specific resources needed to improve their mental health and take tangible steps towards a more secure future, such as seeking employment.

Technical Note for the Community Connection Model

A multiple linear regression was conducted to analyse the impact of food club use and food insecurity on a household's sense of community connection. The dependent variable was the single item 'How connected do you feel with your local community?'. The model included the same set of demographic and economic controls as the wellbeing model.

The final model was statistically significant ($F(17, 13774) = 98.025$, $p < .001$) and explained 10.7% of the variance in community connection (Adjusted $R^2 = .107$). Diagnostic tests confirmed the model's robustness. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were below 2.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue. Analysis of the model's residuals confirmed that the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity, and normality of errors were all met.

Technical Note on the Personal Wellbeing Score

To create a holistic measure of personal wellbeing, a composite score was created. The score is the mean of six individual survey items: happiness, life satisfaction, sense of worthwhileness, positivity about the future, mental health rating, and a reverse-scored loneliness item.

The scale demonstrated high internal reliability, with a Cronbach's Alpha of .894, which is well above the .70 threshold considered good in social science research. This confirms that the items are effectively measuring the same underlying concept of personal wellbeing. The slightly lower correlation of the 'loneliness' item, likely attributable to a response set effect from its reverse-wording, did not compromise the scale's high overall reliability. Its conceptual importance to the study's aims, therefore, warranted its inclusion in the final, robust scale.

Technical Note on the Wellbeing Model

To isolate the impact of food club use on wellbeing while accounting for pre-existing hardship, a multiple linear regression was conducted. The dependent variable was the composite 'Personal Wellbeing Score'. The model included key demographic and economic control variables from the earlier food club user model, a variable for food insecurity, a variable for food club use, and an interaction term between food insecurity and food club use.

The final model, based on a sample of 13,792 respondents, was statistically significant ($F(17, 13774) = 239.262$, $p < .001$) and explained 22.7% of the variance in personal wellbeing (Adjusted $R^2 = .227$). In social science research, this represents a substantial and meaningful explanation of a complex outcome, such as wellbeing.

Key diagnostic tests confirmed the model's robustness. The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores for all variables were below 2.0, indicating that multicollinearity was not an issue, and the model is stable. Analysis of the model's residuals showed that the assumptions of linearity, homoscedasticity (equal error variance), and normality of errors were met, confirming that the results are valid and reliable.

Conclusion: A Comprehensive Response to a Compounding Crisis

The evidence in this section is clear: the impact of the food club model is substantial precisely because it provides a holistic response to the compounding nature of food insecurity. The analysis confirms that they are a successful Rung 2 activity on the ‘Food Ladders’, providing the integrated resources needed to build genuine household resilience.

The crisis of food insecurity is not just a lack of money; it is a cascade of negative impacts. It damages a household's finances, degrades their nutrition, harms their physical health, isolates them from their community, and erodes their psychological wellbeing.

The food club model, as this analysis demonstrates, provides a targeted and effective intervention for each of these compounding harms. It challenges the ‘skills deficit narrative, showing that members are often already resourceful, and provides a space where these skills are validated and enhanced. It improves nutrition and physical health by directly addressing the primary barriers of affordability and availability. This improvement is reinforced by the evidence that nutrition gains decline once support is removed. Most profoundly, the model rebuilds the social fabric, acting as a gateway to wider support and providing a powerful protective buffer for personal wellbeing, as seen in the experiences of ‘N’ and Alicijia.

By addressing the fundamental human needs for connection, dignity, and hope alongside the need for food, the food club model provides a robust and effective pathway towards a more resilient future.

A Comparative Analysis of Food Support Models

Having established the multi-faceted positive impact of the food club model, this section now turns to a direct comparison of the different types of charitable food support available to households. This analysis is not an evaluation of food banks, but rather an exploration of the other impacts that different models of support have on the households that use them. It positions these interventions along a continuum of support.

In this analysis, a clear distinction is made between an emergency and a crisis. An emergency is defined as a sudden, short-term shock that destabilises a household, such as an unexpected bill or a brief loss of income. A crisis, in contrast, is understood as a state of prolonged, structural hardship that creates a cascade of compounding harms. As the previous section demonstrated, a crisis is more than just financial; it is a state that damages physical health, erodes psychological wellbeing, and frays social connections.

Food banks were initially designed to provide emergency support in response to an acute shock. However, as was established in the ‘Setting the Scene’ section, the landscape of UK food insecurity is shifting towards a more persistent, crisis-driven need. This is a reality confirmed by the earlier predictive models in this report, which show that the need for food support is often driven by the structural factors of a prolonged crisis, such as insecure housing and long-term health conditions. This creates a potential mismatch between an emergency response model and the reality of a household's needs. Food clubs, conversely, are designed to work further upstream. They act as a form of prevention for those at risk of crisis, while also providing the resources for repair and resilience building for those already experiencing its compounding harms.

The experiential difference between these two models, and the importance of dignity in the process, is powerfully captured by one food club user:

> ‘It is one degree above the absolute poverty of accepting help from local food banks, the [Food Club] allows cheaper food purchase with dignity... On weeks where money has been tight, it has allowed me to be able to feed my family better for more days than going to the supermarket and is less embarrassing than having to beg for a voucher at the food bank!’
> (The Bread and Butter Thing, Annual Survey 2024).

This section positions the two primary models of food support against each other using the Food Ladders framework. Since the survey provides a snapshot in time, this analysis does not track outcomes but instead compares the current characteristics of households using a food bank (Rung 1) with those using a food club (Rung 2). By examining how the use of each model is associated with a household's present level of financial, nutritional, and social resilience, the analysis illuminates the distinct functions they serve for people at different points of crisis and recovery.

Profiling Service Users

This section begins by establishing the distinct household profiles for households using different types of food support, as detailed in Table 23. The table shows both the distribution of each group within the survey sample and their current food security status.

Table 23: Distribution of Households by Support Service Use

	N	Sample %	Food Secure %
No services	12899	91.1%	86.6%
Have used a food club but stopped and have not used a food bank in the prior three months	403	2.8%	78.9%
Use a food club now but have not used a food bank in the prior three months	248	1.8%	73.4%
Use a food club and have used a food bank in the prior three months	211	1.5%	42.7%
Stopped using a food club but used a food bank in the last three	52	.4%	44.2%
Use only a food bank	343	2.4%	37.0%

The distribution of respondents in the table reveals distinct patterns of engagement with food support. Among current service users, the data identifies several groups, including those who exclusively use a food club (1.8% of the sample) and a similarly sized group who at the time of the survey used both a food club and a food bank (1.5%). However, a striking pattern relates to the former food club members. Of the 455 respondents that said they no longer used the food club, the vast majority (88.6%) did not turn to a food bank in the previous three months. This finding is significant: it demonstrates that for a large majority of former members, leaving a food club is not a precursor to crisis support but rather appears to be a marker of stability, as they are able to manage without subsequently turning to a food bank.

The food security data in the final column reveals a clear gradient of need across the active user groups. Households that only use a food club report a high level of food security (73.4%). This illustrates the model's Rung 2 function as a tool that helps households manage food security precarity and prevent a slide into acute crisis. The level of hardship increases significantly for those who use both services, with their food security dropping to 42.7%. The highest concentration of need is found among households that only use a food bank, which report the lowest level of food security (37.0%). This pattern aligns with the Food Ladders concept, illustrating a Rung 1 service designed for those in the most urgent need.

To understand the dynamic between the two services for those in the most acute need, 'dual users' were asked if their food bank use had changed since joining a food club. The results show that for this group, the food club appears to act as a complementary form of support rather than a direct replacement for emergency aid. The data shows that for the majority of these 'dual users' (69.4%), their reliance on food banks either stays the same (52.9%) or increases (16.5%) after joining a food club, indicating a deep and ongoing level of crisis. However, for a substantial minority (30.7%), the food club does appear to provide a pathway to reduced hardship, as they report using the food bank less since becoming members. Furthermore, this positive effect seems to strengthen over time; the proportion of members reducing their food bank use is highest (32%) among those who first joined the club more than a year ago, suggesting the club's stabilising influence can take considerable time to develop for this high-need group.

Finally, and critically, there is a significant group of households that are experiencing food insecurity but are not accessing any formal support. The data reveal that 13.4% of those who have never used a food club and 21.1% of those who have stopped using a food club experienced recent food insecurity but did not turn to a food bank for support, accounting for 9.6% of the total survey population (1360 respondents). This points to a significant unmet need and suggests that barriers such as lack of awareness, stigma, or practical issues may be preventing households from getting the help they need.

Understanding the Pathways to Support

The preceding analysis shows that households using different services have distinct levels of need. To move beyond this observation and understand the underlying circumstances that differentiate these groups, a multinomial logistic regression model was developed. This analysis models the factors associated with different "pathways" of support. To align with the Food Ladders framework, households using only a food bank were set as the reference category, representing the baseline of acute crisis (Rung 1). The model then identifies the factors associated with using no services, only a food club, or both services, compared to this crisis baseline. The results are presented in Table 24.

The model first profiles households that use no services against those who use food banks. This analysis reveals a clear picture of both economic and social stability. As expected, they are far more likely to be food secure (+337.5%) and financially resilient (+76.7%) than food bank users. The odds of being in this group increase with age (+1.3% per year) and income (+16.7% per £5k increase), while they are significantly less likely to be working part-time (-51.0%) or relying solely on benefits (-39.2%). Beyond these financial markers, the model underscores the importance of social structure and life stage. These households are more likely to be in a non-cohabitating relationship (+67.9%), and the data suggest they have fewer dependents, with marginally significant findings indicating they are less likely to have caring responsibilities or children. This profile represents a household with comprehensive resilience, built on both financial resources and a stable social foundation.

In contrast, the profile of those who use a ‘Food Club Only’ is more nuanced, suggesting a strategy for managing hardship rather than an absence of it. While this group is more food secure (+182.5%) and financially resilient (+61.9%) than the food bank group, the dominant factors that set them apart are social and asset-based. They are dramatically more likely to own their own home (+228.5%), a powerful indicator of long-term, foundational stability, even if weekly income is a struggle. Furthermore, their household structure is distinct; they are significantly more likely to be living with a partner (+90.3%) or be separated/divorced (+65.8%). Combined with demographic findings (being 39.8% less likely to be male) this profile aligns with the function of a Rung 2 service. It appears to serve a population with a different set of social and asset-based resources to manage an intense income-expenditure squeeze.

Table 24: Multinomial Regression Comparing User Groups to Food Bank Users

Variable Category	Predictor	Exp (B) Odds	Odds %	Sig.
No Services group				
Income	£5k Increase in earnings	1.167	16.7%	<.001**
Age	1 year increase	1.013	1.3%	.018*
Food Security	Food Secure	4.375	337.5%	<.001**
Financial resilience	Has £100 for an unexpected expense	1.767	76.7%	<.001**
Employment	Part time	.490	-51.0%	.007**
Income source	Employment earnings	1.627	62.7%	.057
	Benefits only	.608	-39.2%	.047*
Care	No Caring	.764	-23.6%	.056
Children	No Children	1.692	69.2%	.060
Relationship	Non-cohabitating relationship	1.679	67.9%	.036*
Urban/Rural	Town and Fringe	.498	-50.2%	.046*
Food Club Only				
Food Security	Food Secure	2.825	182.5%	<.001
Financial Resilience	Has £100 for an unexpected expense	1.619	61.9%	.023*
Relationship	Lives with partner	1.903	90.3%	.006**
	Separated/Divorced	1.658	65.8%	.048*
Housing Tenure	Own	3.285	228.5%	.012*
Gender	Male	.602	-39.8%	.005**
Ethnicity	White other ethnicities	.294	-70.6%	.029*
	Asian Ethnicities	.199	-80.1%	.031*
Both Services				
Work Status	Work full-time	2.885	188.5%	.031*
	Work part-time	2.819	181.9%	.032*
	Retired	3.839	283.9%	.016*
Income Source	Wages and Benefits	2.611	161.1%	.039*
	Benefits only	2.772	177.2%	.039*
Care Responsibilities	Has a caring responsibility for someone with a LTHC	1.902	90.2%	.002**

*Significant at p <0.05, (95% confidence). **Significant at p <0.01 (99% confidence).

Finally, the model identifies the ‘Both Services’ group as facing a state of compounded disadvantage, where economic precarity and social pressures intersect. The financial story is one of in-work poverty; compared to food bank users, this group is significantly more likely to be working full-time (+188.5%), working part-time (+181.9%), or be retired (+283.9%). Their income sources confirm that a job or pension alone is not enough to prevent hardship, as they have higher odds of receiving wages and benefits (+161.1%) or benefits only (+177.2%) than those who use only a food bank. This economic vulnerability is then compounded by the profound social pressure of caring responsibilities, with this group having 90.2% higher odds of being a carer. This paints a picture of a household under immense strain, where the formal economic and benefits systems fail to provide security, and intense social duties multiply the burden.

By detailing the circumstances of these other groups, the model implicitly defines the profile of the 'Food Bank Only' user. They represent the group in acute crisis, primarily characterised by what they lack: the financial and asset-based buffers of the other groups, and the social stability of a live-in partnership. By inference, the Food Bank user is more likely to be younger, male, single, not in work, and renting, while facing the most severe levels of financial and food insecurity. This reinforces their position at Rung 1 of the Food Ladder, a pathway defined by an acute lack of the economic, social, and structural resources needed to weather a crisis.

In summary, the model distinguishes between different states of hardship by identifying the distinct circumstances associated with each support pathway. It reveals that the 'Food Bank Only' pathway is a response to an acute crisis, characterised by a lack of social, financial, and asset-based buffers. In contrast, the model shows that the 'Food Club Only' and 'Both Services' pathways are responses to different forms of chronic precarity. Food club use is linked to managing an income-expenditure squeeze from a position of greater social and asset-based stability, while using both services is strongly associated with the compounded pressures of in-work poverty and caring responsibilities.

Technical Note on the Model

A multinomial logistic regression model was used to analyse the association between a range of socio-demographic and circumstantial variables and a household's support pathway (Outcome groups: No Services, Food Club Only, Both Services, with Food Bank Only as the reference category). The analysis was conducted on a sample of 13,825 valid cases.

The final model is statistically significant ($\chi^2(87) = 1108.398$, $p < .001$), and an insignificant Pearson Goodness-of-Fit test ($p = 1$) indicates a good overall model fit to the data. The model accounts for 17.9% of the variance in user group membership (Nagelkerke $R^2 = .179$). In social science research, where complex human behaviours are influenced by a multitude of factors, this figure represents a substantial and meaningful explanation of the circumstances that differentiate the user groups.

The model's predictive accuracy is primarily driven by its ability to correctly identify the largest group ("No Services"). Its capacity to correctly classify the smaller user groups (Food Club, Food Bank, Both) is low. This is a common and expected finding in models with an imbalanced outcome, where one category is much more prevalent than the others.

Therefore, the primary value of this model is not in predicting which service an individual household will use. Rather, its strength lies in its explanatory power: it robustly identifies the key financial, social, and demographic circumstances associated with the different pathways of support, providing a nuanced understanding of the factors that differentiate these groups.

A Deeper Dive: The Association Between Support Pathways and Key Health and Wellbeing Indicators

A previous section of this report established a key finding based on members' self-reported changes over time: on the whole, engagement with a food club provides a significant 'buffering effect', offsetting a portion of the negative psychological impact of food insecurity. This section now seeks to add further nuance by using a different analytical lens. It moves from a broad analysis to a more granular, comparative examination of the experience of current users of different support models.

Crucially, this part of the analysis uses cross-sectional data—a statistical snapshot taken at a single point in time. This method cannot prove that a service causes a specific outcome. Instead, its strength lies in revealing the role that pre-existing circumstances play in shaping a household's wellbeing and in determining which support pathway they take. The goal is to disentangle the distinct profiles of households using a food club only, a food bank only, or both, and to understand how their outcomes differ when their underlying circumstances are taken into account.

This section presents a complex and nuanced analysis that requires a slightly different structure than previous sections. Three tables are presented in sequence to build the argument.

- Table 25 provides a descriptive overview, showing the mean scores for four key indicators across the different service user groups. For context, it also includes a column showing the average scores for all food-insecure households in the sample.
- Table 26 presents the results from the first set of regression models. It shows the adjusted difference (B-coefficient) in the indicator scores for each service user group when compared directly to the 'Food Bank Only' group, after controlling for a range of socio-demographic factors, including food insecurity.
- Table 27 presents results from the same model as Table 28 but isolates the specific association between food insecurity and the indicators within each of the paired comparisons.

A brief description of the main findings will follow each table. Because the full story can only be understood by considering all three tables together, a comprehensive 'Discussion' section is provided at the end. This final section synthesises the evidence, explains apparent paradoxes, and offers a complete interpretation of the relationship between household circumstances, support pathways, and wellbeing.

Table 25: Mean Indicator Scores by Service User Group

Indicator Measure	No Services Now	Food Club Only Now	Food Bank Only Now	Both Services Now	Food Insecure (all groups)
Community Connection	4.28	4.90	4.20	5.58	3.43
Feel supported	6.34	6.21	5.37	6.36	5.11
Physical Health	5.54	5.51	4.70	4.48	4.50
Composite Wellbeing	6.12	6.07	4.87	5.94	4.60

The descriptive data indicate a significant gap across all measures between the stable ‘No Services’ group and the average for all ‘Food Insecure’ households. Within the service user groups, those using a food bank only report the lowest scores across all four indicators. In contrast, the ‘Food Club Only’ group's scores for physical health and wellbeing are close to those of the ‘No Services’ group. A key pattern is the high level of community connection reported by the ‘Food Club Only’ (4.90) and especially the ‘Both Services’ (5.58) groups, with scores higher than that of the ‘No Services’ group (4.28).

Table 26: Adjusted Differences in Indicators Compared to Food Bank Users

	No Services v Food Banks		Food Club v Food Bank		Both Services v Food Bank	
Comparison	B	Sig	B	Sig	B	Sig
Community Connection	.236	<.001**	-.023	.845	-1.004	<.001**
Feel Supported	.003	.938	-.070	.532	-.732	.002**
Physical Health	.003	.065	-.195	.070	-.816	<.001**
Composite Wellbeing	-.028	.416	-.231	.015*	-.722	<.001*

*Significant at p <0.05, (95% confidence). **Significant at p <0.01 (99% confidence).

The regression results provide a controlled comparison between the service user groups, with the ‘Food Bank Only’ group as the reference. After controlling for underlying socio-demographic factors, most of the large raw differences seen previously are no longer statistically significant. Notably, after adjusting for circumstances, there are no significant differences in most indicators between the ‘No Services’ or ‘Food Club Only’ groups when compared to the ‘Food Bank Only’ group. The one exception is a small, significant negative association between food club use and wellbeing (B = -.231). In stark contrast, the ‘Both Services’ group is associated with significantly lower scores across all four indicators compared to the ‘Food Bank Only’ group.

Table 27: Food insecurity influence on Indicators

	No Services v Food Banks		Food Club v Food Bank		Both Services v Food Bank	
Comparison	B	Sig	B	Sig	B	Sig
Community Connection	-.598	<.001**	-.676	.009**	-.646	<.012*
Feel Supported	-.844	<.001**	-.147	.544	-.138	.580**
Physical Health	-.654	<.001**	-.323	.164	-.396	<.093**
Composite Wellbeing	-.924	<.001**	-.731	<.001**	-.722	<.001*

*Significant at p <0.05, (95% confidence). **Significant at p <0.01 (99% confidence).

Table 27 isolates the association between food insecurity and the four indicators in each paired comparison. The results show that food insecurity has a strong, statistically significant negative association with Composite Wellbeing and Community Connection across all groups. However, a different pattern emerges for Feel Supported and Physical Health. The negative association is strong and significant within the 'No Services' vs. 'Food Bank' comparison, but it becomes much smaller and is not statistically significant within the 'Food Club' or 'Both Services' comparisons.

Discussion

This multi-stage analysis provides a nuanced understanding of the relationship between household circumstances, support pathways, and wellbeing. The findings confirm that the differences in health and social indicators among service users primarily reflect their pre-existing circumstances. A household's starting position is the most potent factor shaping its experience of hardship.

However, the analysis also provides crucial insight into the nature of food insecurity itself. As established throughout this report, food insecurity is a multi-faceted experience that extends beyond a simple lack of money; it also exacts a significant toll on social connections, mental health, and physical wellbeing.

It is in this context that the role of charitable food support becomes clear. The findings from Table 27 demonstrate a powerful 'buffering effect'. For households not currently using a service, food insecurity has a strong and statistically significant negative association with both feeling supported (B = -.844) and physical health (B = -.654). For those actively engaged with food clubs or both services, however, this link is weakened to the point of no longer being statistically significant.

This suggests that the services are mitigating the critical non-financial consequences of food insecurity—a finding with significant implications. An approach focused solely on alleviating financial hardship, such as through direct cash transfers, risks overlooking the profound social and health-related dimensions of the situation. While monetary support is essential, this analysis indicates it may not be sufficient on its own to repair the damage to the social fabric and health caused by food insecurity.

Ultimately, this analysis indicates that community-based food support provides a "more-than-food" or "more-than-money" intervention. By acting as social hubs and providing reparative support, these services help to mitigate the secondary effects of food insecurity. Any comprehensive strategy to tackle food insecurity must therefore acknowledge and address not only its financial roots but also its profound impact on the health and social wellbeing of households.

Technical Note on the Comparative Impact Models

Twelve separate linear regression models were run to analyse the association between current service use and four key indicators: community connection, feelings of being supported, physical health, and a composite score of wellbeing. Each indicator was modelled three times to allow for direct comparisons against the 'Food Bank Only' reference group. All models were statistically significant ($p < .001$), and all Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) scores were below 3, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern.

Conclusion: Food Ladders, Resilience, and a ‘More-Than-Money’ Approach

This analysis has used the ‘Food Ladders’ framework as a lens to distinguish between the different functions of charitable food support. The evidence demonstrates that these models are not interchangeable; they serve distinct populations. The profiling models show that food banks (Rung 1) are a response for households in acute crisis, often lacking foundational social and asset-based buffers. Food clubs (Rung 2), in contrast, are used by households managing a more chronic state of precarity, but who often retain some of these key buffers. The analysis also identified a group using both services, distinguished from the ‘Food Bank Only’ group by their specific circumstances. These are often households with income from work, but who are severely squeezed by additional pressures, such as caring responsibilities, which challenge their financial, social, and physical resources. Their use of both Rung 1 and Rung 2 support suggests a strategic response to manage this complex hardship. This illustrates that while all users are in a precarious position, the nature and severity of their hardship differ significantly.

Furthermore, the analysis reinforces a central theme of this report: food insecurity is a crisis that extends beyond a simple lack of money, with strong negative associations with a household's health, wellbeing, and social connection. It is in this context that the role of community-based support becomes evident. The finding of a ‘buffering effect’ suggests that active engagement with these services helps to mitigate some of the critical non-financial consequences of food insecurity, particularly those related to social support and health.

Ultimately, these findings lead to a unifying conclusion. While the analysis shows that the groups using different support models face distinct circumstances, their experiences point to the same reality: the damage caused by food insecurity cannot be repaired by money alone. The prolonged stress of a crisis erodes a household’s social connections and its physical and mental health. This analysis indicates that community-based support provides a vital ‘more-than-money’ intervention that addresses these non-financial harms. Therefore, any effective strategy to support households must look beyond simple cash transfers and incorporate the social and reparative support needed to address the full, devastating toll of food insecurity.

Navigating Transitions: Understanding Why Members Conclude Their Food Club Membership

Having established who uses different services and the impact they have, this final analytical section addresses a crucial question: why do members stop using a food club? Understanding these transitions is essential. A departure often signifies a success—a household has built sufficient resilience and no longer requires the support. In other cases, a departure may occur when a household encounters specific **logistical barriers** or **operational constraints** that no longer align with their evolving circumstances. This analysis provides the insights needed to distinguish between these different journeys, helping to ensure the support ecosystem remains as accessible as possible.

Understanding the Factors of Departure

To understand why members move on from a food club, former members were asked to rate the importance of several factors in their decision. These considerations, identified through focus groups, reflect the practical intersection between a household's daily life and the service model (Table 28).

Table 28: Overview of factors influencing the decision to stop

Factor	% Not at all important	% Extremely important	Mean	SD	Median
Cost	37.6%	16.5%	5.08	3.920	5
Type of food available	20.0%	16.3%	6.43	3.490	7
Choice of food available	18.0%	15.8%	6.57	3.392	7
Quality of food	20.7%	14.9%	6.31	3.465	7
The balance between snacks and meals	23.3%	11.2%	5.84	3.380	6
Unable to use all the food	26.4%	8.8%	5.29	3.346	6
Distance required to travel to the food club	21.8%	20.4%	6.40	3.717	7
Opening times	20.4%	18.2%	6.41	3.554	7
Other people who used the club	42.2%	3.5%	4.02	3.176	3

N=455

The data reveal a complex picture, suggesting that the reasons for leaving a food club are highly individualized. A notable pattern is that a larger proportion of former members rated each factor as 'not at all important' than 'extremely important.' This indicates that for many, there is no single "deal-breaker." Instead, for those who do find certain factors significant, the decision often centres on how the available food offer or logistical parameters (such as timing or distance) fit into their specific life context.

For instance, while logistical challenges were influential for a subset of former members, they were entirely irrelevant for others. The distance required to travel (mean = 6.40) and the club's opening times (mean = 6.41) were decisive for approximately one-in-five people. This highlights how external pressures—such as work schedules or transport access—can turn standard operational hours into a personal barrier for specific households, even if those same hours work perfectly for their neighbours.

Four Journeys from the Food Club: A Closer Look at Why People Stop

While individual reasons are insightful, a deeper analysis reveals that former members do not leave for a single reason, but due to a combination of factors. A cluster analysis identified four distinct groups of former users, each reflecting a unique intersection between household needs and the food club model (Table 29).

These clusters represent four distinct journeys away from the food club:

- **Broad Operational Mismatch (30.8%):** The largest group, for whom a wide range of service factors did not align with their specific household requirements.
- **Access & Logistical Barriers (29.0%):** A group satisfied with food and cost, but for whom external practical barriers—such as travel distance and opening times—became difficult to navigate.
- **Transitioning Members (21.5%):** This group did not cite dissatisfaction; their departure was not driven by service-related obstacles.
- **Specific Product Preferences (18.7%):** A smaller group whose needs regarding the type, choice, or variety of food differed from the available offer.

To understand the factors shaping these different journeys, a multinomial regression analysis was conducted. This analysis helps identify the factors most strongly associated with a former member belonging to one of these four groups.

Navigating Barriers to Engagement

Nearly two-thirds of former members moved away from the service after encountering barriers related to either logistics or the specific food offer. Rather than a uniform experience, these obstacles are often **person-specific**, depending on a household's unique circumstances.

The analysis shows that a household’s housing situation is a significant factor. Compared to those in social housing, homeowners were 47% less likely (OR=.53, p=.040) to fall into the ‘Broad Operational Mismatch’ cluster. This suggests that the current model may align differently with the expectations of different housing groups.

Table 29: Discontinuation Segments and Their Defining Factors

	1: Systemic Dissatisfaction	2. Access Barriers	3. No stated Issues	4. Food Offer Dissatisfaction
Number of members	140	132	98	85
% of users	30.8%	29%	21.5%	18.7%
Mean scores				
Cost	9	5	1	3
Types of food	9	6	1	8
Choice of food	9	6	2	8
Quality of food	9	6	1	8
Balance between snacks and meals	9	6	2	6
Unable to use all the food	8	5	2	6
Distance	9	8	3	3
Opening times	9	7	3	5
Other members	6	4	2	4

Practical barriers also affect households unevenly. For example, those in part-time work were significantly more likely to face 'Access Barriers' than full-time workers or those not in work. This highlights how **individual time-poverty** and inflexible work schedules can transform standard opening hours into a significant personal barrier, regardless of the service’s intent.

A Counterpoint: Factors Driving Resilience

The analysis provides a key insight into how personal context dictates which barriers are "overcome-able." Households with full-time caring responsibilities were 54% less likely to leave due to access issues. For this group, the food club often serves as a critical component of their resilience toolkit. The benefits of financial relief and social connection are so highly valued that they outweigh the logistical hurdles, demonstrating that what acts as a barrier for one household may be managed as a necessary trade-off by another.

The Role of Improved Food Security

The regression model shows that becoming food secure is the single most potent predictor of a member stopping their use of the service. However, this improved stability influences households in different ways.

For the 21.5% of former members in the ‘Transitioning’ cluster, leaving appears to represent a successful move away from the need for support. However, for others, becoming food secure increases the odds of being in the ‘Operational Mismatch’ cluster by 71%. This suggests that as a household’s acute need for food lessens, their personal threshold for logistical challenges may change. Factors like choice or timing, which were manageable during a period of intense hardship, may be viewed differently once a degree of stability is achieved.

This reframes the act of leaving not as a failure of the service, but as a reflection of the evolving relationship between a household and the support offered. For many, leaving is a positive milestone enabled by improved circumstances, allowing them to seek alternatives that better suit their new, more stable requirements.

Technical Note on the Analysis

A two-stage analytical process was used to understand the reasons for leaving the food club.

1. **Cluster Analysis:** A two-step cluster analysis was conducted on former members (N = 455) to identify natural groupings based on their stated reasons for leaving. This method first determined that a four-cluster solution was the most statistically robust and then assigned each individual to one of the four segments discussed in the text.
2. **Multinomial Logistic Regression:** A multinomial regression was then used to analyse the socio-demographic factors associated with membership in these four discontinuation clusters. The overall model was statistically significant (Likelihood Ratio Test: $\chi^2 = 104.336$, $p < .001$) and accounted for 12.3% of the variance in group membership (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.123$). Its primary value is in identifying the factors that significantly increase or decrease the odds of a former member belonging to one cluster over another.

Conclusion: A Complex Journey of Discontinuation

This analysis set out to understand why members stop using a food club, distinguishing between departures that signify a successful transition and those shaped by persistent logistical barriers. The evidence reveals a nuanced picture where the act of leaving is an outcome of the intersection between a household’s changing circumstances and the practical constraints inherent in any community-based service model.

The findings demonstrate that for a significant portion of former members, departure is influenced by tangible logistical hurdles. Specific groups, such as residents in social housing and those in part-time work, are more likely to encounter person-specific barriers related to access or service alignment. Rather than suggesting a universal failure, this highlights how external factors—like inflexible work schedules—can make a community service model more difficult for certain individuals to navigate. Conversely, the data shows that for others, such as full-time carers, the profound benefits of the service often outweigh these same logistical challenges, illustrating how the perception of "barriers" is deeply tied to individual context.

Ultimately, the most powerful predictor of a member leaving is becoming food secure. For many, this leads to a straightforward and positive transition away from the need for support. For others, improved stability appears to shift their personal threshold for managing logistical constraints, allowing them to move on once their acute need has been met.

This reframes the end of a membership not as a simple metric of service performance, but as the logical endpoint of a dynamic journey. An effective food club model, therefore, has a dual focus: it can look to minimize the operational barriers that make access difficult for working families, while also recognizing that a primary measure of success is enabling a household to reach a point of stability where the service is no longer a necessity.

Beyond the Emergency: A Framework for a Resilient Food Support System

This report began by drawing a crucial distinction between a short-term emergency and the reality of structural precarity. Using the metaphor of a building, an emergency is a sudden event, like a broken window, which requires a rapid repair. Structural precarity, in contrast, is a state of crumbling foundations, which makes the entire structure vulnerable to collapse from even minor shocks. The evidence presented throughout this research has consistently demonstrated that, for a significant and growing number of UK households, food insecurity is a defining feature.

This conclusion draws together the report's main threads to present a final, synthesised argument. First, it revisits the report's foundational analysis of the 'architecture of hardship', summarising the evidence that defines food insecurity as a state of structural precarity. Second, it turns to the 'infrastructure of resilience', synthesising the findings on the affordable food club model's positive impact and its distinct role in the broader support ecosystem as a Rung 2 intervention. Third, it provides a nuanced analysis of journeys away from the food club, exploring the complex reasons members leave and what success looks like in practice. Finally, the conclusion looks forward, outlining a clear agenda for future research and presenting a series of evidence-based policy implications to build a more resilient, food-secure future.

The Architecture of Hardship

A central argument of this research is that food insecurity in the UK must be understood through the lens of structural precarity, not a series of isolated emergencies. The evidence in this report indicates that for many households, the foundations of their security are fundamentally compromised across multiple dimensions, mirroring the established pillars of food security: availability, access, utilisation, and stability.

A key dimension of this is the profound instability. The data capture a population with critically low levels of resilience, where the foundations are so fragile that they cannot withstand even minor pressures. The findings show that for many households, a small, unexpected expense is enough to shatter a finely balanced budget. For households with secure foundations, such events are inconveniences; for those who are living precarious lives, these are not rare shocks but a regular, recurring feature of everyday life that constantly threatens to trigger an acute emergency. This financial precarity is often compounded by a deficit in social resilience, turning a manageable problem into a potential disaster. This constant vulnerability defines structural precarity: a state of having no buffer, no margin for error, and no capacity to plan for the future.

The crisis of access and stability is compounded by failures in availability and access, which operate at multiple scales. At a broad geographical level, the research reveals a stark urban-rural divide and inequitable 'foodscapes' where the very building materials for a healthy life are structurally limited. At a more local level, these larger patterns often overlap with the micro-geography of housing. The analysis suggests that concentrations of low-income or social housing are frequently found within these poorly served foodscapes, creating a double bind in which residents with the least financial resources also have the poorest physical access to nutritious food.

Furthermore, even where food is available and accessible, the pillar of utilisation is undermined by factors that go far beyond cooking skills. While this research powerfully counters the 'skills deficit' narrative, it also highlights that skills are not enough. Effective utilisation is severely hampered by poor housing conditions, the constant cognitive load of managing poverty, time poverty, and the poor physical health often associated with food insecurity. The crisis, therefore, is not a lack of individual capacity, but a systemic failure where the very strategies people use to secure themselves are proving insufficient against overwhelming structural pressures.

This initial failure—the crumbling of the foundations—is where the spiralling nature of deterioration begins. The evidence for this cascading process of harm is clear. The initial crack in the foundation—the chronic stress of managing a precarious budget—quickly spreads. The psychological ‘wiring’ begins to fray, evidenced by the direct statistical relationship between the severity of food insecurity and a decline in psychological wellbeing. Simultaneously, the social 'pipework' starts to leak, as households report a marked decrease in their ability to participate in community life, leading to a corrosive increase in loneliness. If these issues are not addressed, the damage becomes structural. The report's findings on dietary quality show how the very fabric of the household is eroded as people are forced to prioritise low-cost, filling foods. This initiates a spiral of decay in which poor diet harms health, which in turn reduces a person's capacity to work or engage socially, turning a repairable problem into a potential foundational failure and making it exponentially harder for a household to rebuild.

The Infrastructure of Resilience: A Comparative Analysis of Support

Understanding the architecture of hardship is the first step; identifying a viable infrastructure of resilience is the second. This report has analysed the complex ecosystem of charitable food support, not to evaluate one model against another, but to understand the distinct roles they play in responding to the different forms of hardship identified.

The Food Club Model: A Tool for Managing Precarity

The evidence from this report establishes the affordable food club model as a distinct and effective tool for households managing structural precarity. The analysis reveals a population that, while facing significant hardship, possesses a different set of resources and circumstances compared to those in acute crisis, such as the foundational stability of home ownership or a live-in partnership. This positions the food club not as an emergency service, but as a proactive platform for managing an intense income-expenditure squeeze. The finding that nearly 90% of former members do not subsequently turn to a food bank is robust evidence that leaving a food club is typically a marker of stability rather than a precursor to a more profound crisis.

The Impact of Engagement: A ‘More-Than-Food’ Intervention

The analysis moves beyond profiling users to provide clear evidence of the model's direct, positive impact. The findings demonstrate that sustained engagement with a food club is statistically associated with a significant improvement in a household's food security, in a dose-response relationship: longer and more frequent engagement predict a greater likelihood of achieving stability. This provides a straightforward, evidence-based narrative of positive progression: households join, engage, and, over time, build their resilience.

Crucially, the impact is not solely financial. This report's analysis of the ‘buffering effect’ is a central finding. While food insecurity has a universally negative association with wellbeing, active engagement with a food club demonstrably mitigates some of its most corrosive non-financial consequences. The service weakens the damaging link between food insecurity and poor physical health or feelings of social isolation. This confirms that the food club operates as a vital ‘more-than-food’ intervention, addressing the social and psychological harms of structural precarity in a way that financial support alone cannot.

The report's comparative analysis provides critical insight into the distinct roles that food clubs and food banks play within the broader support ecosystem. The evidence demonstrates conclusively that these services are not interchangeable. The analysis positions the ‘Food Bank Only’ user at Rung 1 of the ladder, experiencing a state of acute crisis that requires an emergency response. In contrast, the ‘Food Club Only’ user is typically managing chronic precarity from a position of greater underlying stability, aligning with the function of a Rung 2 service. The analysis also identifies a third group facing a compounded crisis—squeezed by in-work poverty and caring responsibilities—who strategically use both Rung 1 and Rung 2 support to manage a persistent set of challenges. This detailed profiling reinforces a central conclusion: a household's pre-existing circumstances are the most potent factor shaping their journey.

Leaving the Food Club

Finally, the analysis of why members conclude their membership provides a sophisticated understanding of success within this model. The decision to move on is rarely a simple binary; instead, it represents a dynamic transition shaped by the evolving alignment between a household's circumstances and the operational parameters of the service.

The findings highlight that for many, departure is a matter of logistical alignment. While certain groups—such as those in part-time work or social housing—may find that standard opening times or specific access points no longer fit their shifting schedules, identifying these areas for optimization offers a clear path to making the model even more inclusive. Conversely, the evidence reveals that for groups like full-time carers, the food club serves as a vital cornerstone of resilience. For these households, the profound benefits of social connection and financial relief are so significant that they successfully navigate logistical hurdles, demonstrating the deep value the service provides.

Ultimately, the most powerful predictor of a member transitioning away from the service is their attainment of food security. For many, this represents a positive graduation from the need for support, fulfilling the primary goal of a Rung 2 service. For others, reaching a higher level of stability provides the freedom to seek different food environments that more closely match their newfound requirements. This reframes the end of a membership as a milestone in a dynamic journey. An effective model, therefore, demonstrates success in two ways: by continually evolving to meet the diverse logistical needs of its members, and by successfully enabling households to progress to a point where they have the stability and choice to move beyond the need for support.

Future Research Agenda

This report provides a robust evidence base for the food club model, but it also highlights areas where further research is needed to refine and scale this approach effectively. The following questions represent a clear agenda for the next phase of research.

First, a deeper understanding of the pathways to independence is required. This analysis has identified a key indicator of success in the 'positive exit,' where members leave the service because their circumstances have improved. To build on this, a longitudinal study is needed to track the long-term outcomes of these members. Understanding and formalising these journeys will not only prove the model's efficacy but also help to establish best practices for enabling sustainable food security.

Second, the wider social and economic value of food clubs should be quantified. Beyond the direct benefits to individuals, the findings suggest that food clubs likely generate significant value by reducing the strain on public services. A full-scale economic analysis to quantify the Social Return on Investment (SROI) of the food club model would be a valuable next step. This would demonstrate the model's cost-effectiveness and its potential to generate savings for healthcare, social care, and other public budgets.

Third, a more detailed exploration of the 'more than food' effect is warranted. The social and community-building aspects of food clubs are central to their success, yet the mechanisms underlying this effect are not fully understood. A detailed qualitative study is needed to explore this 'black box' of community connection. Investigating how social capital is built and identifying the key interactions that foster a sense of belonging will allow for the replication of best practices across the network.

Fourth, further research is needed to tailor interventions for specific high-need populations. This report has noted that aggregated data can mask the distinct needs of specific ethnic groups, individuals with Long-Term Health Conditions (LTHCs), and those in different housing tenures. Granular, targeted research to understand the particular barriers and success factors for these populations would be beneficial. This would enable the design of more inclusive, culturally competent, and impactful services.

Fifth, this report identifies a significant group of households that are food insecure but are not accessing any formal support. Further research should identify the primary barriers that prevent this group from accessing help and what coping strategies they rely on instead. Understanding this would help ensure that the support ecosystem is not only effective for those it reaches but also accessible to all who need it.

Finally, further understanding is needed regarding those who are in a state of compounded crisis who strategically use both food clubs and food banks. The current analysis profiles who they are, but a deeper qualitative study would explore the dynamics of this pathway. This research could reveal, for example, if the use of both services is a long-term strategy for managing deep and persistent hardship, or a temporary phase during an acute shock. It could also provide insights into how people using both services navigate the two modules and if they serve distinct purposes. Understanding this specific journey would also provide deeper insights for service design, particularly for supporting households facing multifaceted forms of hardship.

Policy Implications for Government

The findings from this study lead to a series of policy recommendations. These are grounded in four key insights from the research, which together form a new framework for building a more resilient, food-secure future.

First, the analysis provides the evidence to move the policy focus from ‘poverty’ to ‘precariousness’. The research found that a defining feature of food insecurity is not simply a low income, but a profound lack of resilience—a household whose foundations are so fragile they cannot withstand even minor shocks. The recommendations are therefore designed not just to alleviate poverty, but to strengthen the foundational stability that is the prerequisite for genuine security.

Second, this research provides large-scale, robust evidence to refute the ‘skills deficit’ narrative. The study has shown that high cooking confidence is not a preventative factor, but a sophisticated coping mechanism developed by resourceful households. The policy proposals are therefore grounded in an asset-based approach that respects the capabilities people already possess and seeks to address the structural cracks—such as poor housing and time poverty—that truly limit their ability to utilise those skills.

Third, the report moves the debate from a simple ‘crisis response’ to a ‘continuum of support’ by validating the ‘Food Ladders’ as a practical policy framework. It has demonstrated the distinct yet complementary roles of Rung 1 (emergency support) and Rung 2 (capacity building), showing how households strategically utilise both to navigate their circumstances. The recommendations that follow are designed to strengthen this entire ecosystem, rebalancing investment to ensure preventative, resilience-building infrastructure is recognised as an essential component of social and public health strategy.

Finally, the analysis provides a nuanced understanding of why members conclude their membership, distinguishing between those who have achieved a successful transition and those whose evolving logistical needs no longer align with the service model. By identifying the ‘Successful Transition’ journey—where over a fifth of members leave because their resilience has been successfully rebuilt—this report offers a new, positive Key Performance Indicator for funders and commissioners. The recommendations advocate for investment in models designed not only to support immediate needs but also to provide a platform for long-term stability, while proactively addressing the operational constraints that can limit access for some households.

1. Recommendation: Adopt a Nuanced Approach to Financial and Holistic Support

While financial security is foundational, the report's findings suggest that for households in a prolonged crisis, the associated harms are social and psychological, not just monetary. The policy response must therefore treat community-based support as a vital complement—not a substitute or ‘nice to have’—for a robust financial safety net.

Actionable Points:

- **Strengthening the primary financial safety net.** The report's findings on the drivers of food insecurity confirm that an adequate and accessible social security system, along with wages that meet the cost of living, are fundamental preventive measures.
- **Integrating holistic support for those in long-term crisis.** For households experiencing the compounding harms of hardship, financial support could be more effectively integrated with pathways to community-based services proven to rebuild social connections and wellbeing.

2. Recommendation: Rebalance Investment Towards Prevention and Resilience

The analysis suggests that the current support ecosystem is heavily weighted towards emergency responses. A more effective long-term strategy would involve rebalancing investments towards upstream, preventative models that have been shown to reduce the need for crisis services.

Actionable Points:

- **Prioritize Resilience-Based Funding:** Align future allocations with the **Crisis and Resilience Fund** to favour **Rung 2 interventions**. Funding should prioritize capacity-building models that rebuild household foundations rather than solely managing immediate crises.
- **Invest in Operational Accessibility:** Leverage funding to address the logistical barriers identified in this report. Support for mobile units or community transport schemes will optimize service reach for households currently constrained by inflexible work schedules or travel distances.

3. Recommendation: Develop a National Strategy for a More Equitable Foodscape

The findings on food environments highlight structural inequalities in access to affordable, nutritious food nationwide. Addressing this requires a strategic, long-term approach.

Actionable Points:

- **Commission a national review of areas with poor access.** This should focus on rural, post-industrial, and coastal communities where this report identified significant challenges.
- **Invest in local food infrastructure.** Consideration could be given to initiatives that improve supply chains for fresh produce to underserved communities.
- **Centre the needs of children and carers.** A national strategy would be most effective if it included a specific focus on the groups identified as most vulnerable to food insecurity, including year-round nutritional support for children and tailored support for households with full-time caring responsibilities.

4. Recommendation: Formally Recognise Food Clubs as a Component of Social and Public Health Infrastructure

The evidence suggests that food clubs serve as more than just food provision points; they are hubs for enhancing mental health and fostering social connection. Policy could be directed towards formally recognising this role.

Actionable Points:

- **Embed public services within trusted community hubs.** Issue guidance for social prescribing link workers, Jobcentre Plus staff, and local authorities to deliver outreach within food clubs—meeting people in familiar, accessible spaces where they already seek support.
- **Integrate food clubs into local strategic planning.** Encourage Health and Wellbeing Boards to include food clubs and other resilience-building models in Joint Strategic Needs Assessments (JSNAs) and local anti-poverty strategies, recognising their role in both prevention and support.
- **Support through a coordinated, cross-departmental strategy.** Develop a joint approach—led by DHSC, DWP, and DLUHC—to fund and sustain food clubs as part of core community infrastructure that bridges health, welfare, and local development goals.

Appendix A: Local Authority/District/Unitary Authority Areas

Barking and Dagenham
Brent
Camden
Greenwich
Hillingdon
Islington
Kensington and Chelsea
Lambeth
Lewisham
Newham
Wandsworth
Bury
Manchester
Oldham
Salford
Stockport
Tameside
Trafford
Wigan
Knowsley
Liverpool
St. Helens
Sefton
Wirral
Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Sheffield
Gateshead
Newcastle upon Tyne
North Tyneside
South Tyneside
Sunderland
Birmingham
Coventry
Dudley
Walsall
Bradford
Calderdale
Kirklees
Leeds
Wakefield
Hartlepool
Middlesbrough
Redcar and Cleveland
Stockton-on-Tees
Darlington
County Durham
Northumberland
Cheshire East
Halton
Warrington
Cheshire West and Chester
Kingston upon Hull, City of
North Lincolnshire
Leicester
Shropshire
Stoke-on-Trent
Bath and North East Somerset
Bristol, City of
North Somerset
Cornwall
Plymouth
Torbay
Swindon
Wiltshire
Peterborough
Central Bedfordshire
Reading
Milton Keynes
Brighton and Hove
Isle of Wight
Gwynedd
Neath Port Talbot
The Vale of Glamorgan
Rhondda, Cynon, Taff
Newport
Aberdeenshire
Edinburgh, City of
Moray
North Ayrshire
South Lanarkshire
Amber Valley
Bolsover
Chesterfield
Derbyshire Dales
Erewash
North East Derbyshire
Exeter
Mid Devon
Teignbridge
Torridge
West Devon
Eastbourne
Hastings
Lewes
Basildon
Castle Point
Chelmsford
Colchester
Epping Forest
Tendring
Cheltenham
Forest of Dean
Gloucester
Stroud
Tewkesbury
Test Valley
Ashford
Canterbury
Swale
Thanet
Hyndburn
Pendle
Charnwood
Hinckley and Bosworth
Oadby and Wigston
East Lindsey
Breckland
Great Yarmouth
King's Lynn and West Norfolk
North Norfolk
Norwich
South Norfolk
Ashfield
Bassetlaw
Gedling
Newark and Sherwood
North Warwickshire
Nuneaton and Bedworth
Warwick
Adur
Arun
Chichester
Crawley
Horsham
Mid Sussex
Worthing
Malvern Hills
Redditch

Causeway Coast and
Glens
Mid and East Antrim
Fife
Perth and Kinross
Glasgow City
North Lanarkshire
Dorset
West Suffolk
West Northamptonshire
Cumberland

Appendix B: Questions asked in survey

1. CR1 Is there a supermarket, corner shop, or fruit and vegetables stall where you can buy fruits and vegetables within a 20 minute walk of where you live? 1 Yes, 2 No
2. CR2 What is the quality of the fruits and vegetables at the shop where you usually buy them? 1 Very Good, 2 Good, 3 Poor, 4 Very Poor
3. CR3 On average, how many portions of fruits and vegetables do you eat per day? 1 Five or more a day, 2 two-4 a day, 3 one a day, 4 less than one a day
4. CR4 How would you rate your cooking skills? 1 very good, 2 good, 3 average, 4 poor, 5 very poor
5. CR5 How would you rate your diet? 1 very healthy, 2 fairly healthy, 3 fairly unhealthy, 4 very unhealthy
6. CR6_1 How happy were you yesterday? Scale 0-10, 0 not at all happy, 10 completely happy
7. CR7_1 Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays? Scale 0-10, 0 not at all satisfied, 10 completely satisfied
8. CR8_1 Overall, to what extent do you feel that the things you do in your life are worthwhile? Scale 0-10, 0 Not at all worthwhile, 10 completely worthwhile
9. CR9_1 To what extent do you feel positive about the future? Scale 0-10, 0 Not at all positive, 10 Completely Positive
10. CR10_1 How lonely have you felt recently? Scale 0-10, 0 Not at all lonely, 10 completely lonely. (Note this variable was reversed for the wellbeing index).
11. CR11_1 How connected do you feel with your local community? Scale 0-10, 0 not at all connected, 10 completely connected
12. CR12_1 How afraid are you of crime in your local community? Scale 0-10, 0 not at all afraid, 10 completely afraid
13. CR13 Would you say you have a good group of friends? 1 Yes, very good, 2 somewhat good, 3 no, I do not have a good group of friends
14. CR14_1 How supported do you feel by other people or others in your life? Scale 0-10, 0 not at all supported, 10 completely supported
15. CR15_1 How would you rate your mental health? Scale 0-10, 0 very poor, 10 extremely good
16. CR16_1 How would you describe your physical health? Scale 0-10, 0 very poor, 10 extremely good
17. CR17 Do you do any volunteering in your community? 1 yes, regularly, 2 yes sometimes, 3 no, I used to but not any more, 4 no never
18. CR18 Do you have full time caring responsibilities for someone with a long-term health condition or disability? 1 yes, I do, 2 no, I do not
19. CR19 Which of the following best describes your household situation? 1 my household receives income from employment earnings only, 2 my household received income from employment earnings and benefits, 3 my household receives income from benefits only, 4 my household receives income from pension income only, 5 my household receives income from other combinations and sources
20. CR20 Do any children in your household receive free school meals? 1 yes, they do, 2 no they do not
21. CR21 Do you have any children that are home schooled? 1 yes, I do, 2 no, I do not

22. CR22 If you had an unexpected expense of £20, could you pay it without borrowing or using credit cards? 1 yes, I could, 2 no, I could not
23. CR23 If you had an unexpected expense of £100, could you pay it without borrowing or using credit cards? 1 yes, I could, 2 no, I could not
24. CR24 In the last three months have you ever been worried that there would not be enough food to feed your household? 1 yes, I have, 2 no, I have not
25. CR25 In the last three months have you ever skipped meals not out of choice (i.e. due to not being able to afford to eat)? 1 yes, I have, 2 no, I have not
26. CR26 In the last three months have you ever skipped meals for a whole day not out of choice (i.e. due to not being able to afford to eat)? 1 yes, I have, 2 no, I have not
27. CR27 In the last month have you felt hunger because you could not afford get food? 1 yes, I have, 2 no, I have not
28. CR28 In the last three months have you gotten free food from a foodbank? 1 yes, I have, 2 no, I have not
29. CR29 Do you know what an affordable food club is? 1 yes, I do, 2 no, I do not (The definition of a food club was inserted here: An affordable food club is a place where people can get their groceries at a very reduced price and are intended to help people stretch their budgets. These may be called pantries, food clubs, larders, community groceries, social supermarkets or another name)
30. CR30 Have you ever used a food club? 1 yes, I have, 2 no I have not
31. CR31 What type of organisation (e.g., Church, school, community centre, stand alone shop) does your food club operates from? Open response
32. CR32 What is the name of the food club you have used? Open response
33. CR33 When did you join the food club? 1 in the last month, 2 between 1 and 3 months ago, 3 more than 3 months ago but less than 6 months, 4 Between 6 months and a year ago, 5 more than a year ago
34. CR34 And would you say you are still using the food club? 1 yes, I would, 2 no, I would not

The following questions were asked only of food club users who indicated that they still use the food club.

35. CR35_1 Since joining the food club, I do not skip meals as much as I used to 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
36. CR35_2 The food club helps me stretch my food budget 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
37. CR35_3 Compared to when I joined the food club I am less worried about being able to feed my family 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
38. CR35_4 Since joining the food club I have tried new foods 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
39. CR35_5 Since joining the food club I feel more confident in myself 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
40. CR35_6 Since joining the food club I feel less alone 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
41. CR35_7 I have made friends through the food club 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
42. CR35_8 The food club has helped me feel more involved in my community 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
43. CR35_9 The food club has helped me to get help with other needs that I have 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree

44. CR35_10 I enjoy going to the food club 1-4 scale, 1 strongly agree, 4 strongly disagree
45. CR36_1 Since joining the food club I eat fruits and vegetables 1 more often, 2 about the same, 3 less often
46. CR36_2 Since joining the food club I eat meals at home 1 more often, 2 about the same, 3 less often
47.
48. CR37 Since joining the food club, has your diet gotten healthier or unhealthier? 1 healthier, 2 about the same, 3 less healthy
49. CR38a Since joining the food club, has your fear of crime in your neighbourhood increased or decreased? 1 increased, 2 stayed the same, 3 decreased
50. CR39_1 How important is the food club for lending structure to your life? 0-10 scale, 0 not at all important, 10 completely important
51. CR40 How much do you enjoy going to the food club? 1 I enjoy it a lot, 2 I enjoy it a bit, 3 I don't enjoy it very much, 4 I don't enjoy it at all
52. CR41 Since joining the food club, do you use the food bank less or more than before you joined? 1 I use it more, I use it about the same, I use it less
53. CR42 How often do you get food from the food club? 1 more than once a week, 2 once a week, 3 less than once a week but more than once a month, 4 about once a month, less than once a month

The following question has several parts and was asked only of those who had stopped using the food club. For each of the following please indicate how important this was for your decision to stop being a member 0 not at all, 10 completely important

54. CR43_1 Cost
55. CR43_2 Types of food available
56. CR43_3 Choice of food available
57. CR43_4 Quality of food available
58. CR43_5 Distance required to travel
59. CR43_6 Other people who used the club
60. CR43_7 The balance between snack foods and things that could be made into meals
61. CR43_8 Feeling like you were unable to use all the food you received
62. CR43_9 The opening times

The following question was asked only of those who had never used a food club

63. CR44 Would you ever consider joining a food club? 1 yes, 2 no

All respondents were asked

64. CR45 Is there anything else you would like to add on the topics covered in this survey? Open response

Questions provided by YouGov

65. Local authority / District / Unitary Authority
66.
67. profile_GOR UK regions and countries lived in [calculated from postcode]
68. IMD_decile_2020 IMDdecile2020 is calculated from postcode using ONS data
69. IMD_quintile_2020 Data recoded from decile calculations
70. postcode_district Postcode district

71. ONS_urban_UK Living in Urban / Rural / Town and Fringe
72. profile_gross_personal Gross PERSONAL income is an individual's total income received from all sources, including wages, salaries, or rents and before tax deductions...What is your gross personal income? £5k increments
73. profile_gross_household Gross HOUSEHOLD income is the combined income of all those earners in a household from all sources, including wages, salaries, or rents and before tax deductions. What is your gross household income? £5K increments up to £39,999
74. profile_work_stat Which of these applies to you? 1 Working full time (30 or more hours per week), 2 working part time (8-29 hours per week), 3 working part time (less than 8 hours per week), full time student, retired, unemployed, not working, other
75. pws2 For which, if any, of the following reasons are you not currently working? 1, Unable to work due to a long term disability or health condition, 2 unable to work due to caring for someone with a long term disability or health condition, 3 unable to work due to child care responsibilities, 4 unable to work due to another reason, 5 none of these. Only asked of those who indicated they were not working.
76. household_type_UK_100 I live alone 0 no, 1 yes
77. household_type_UK_2 Living with friend(s) or housemate(s) 0 no, 1 yes
78. household_type_UK_3 Living with parent(s) 0 no, 1 yes
79. household_type_UK_4 Living with brother(s) or sister(s) 0 no, 1 yes
80. household_type_UK_5 Living with child(ren) who are over 18 0 no, 1 yes
81. household_type_UK_6 Living with child(ren) who are below 18 0 no, 1 yes
82. household_type_UK_7 Living with other adult family members, e.g., Grandparents, Cousins, etc. 0 no, 1 yes
83. household_type_UK_8 Living with grandchild(ren) (by grandchildren we mean the children of your children, whether by birth, adoption, or relationship) 0 no, 1 yes
84. household_type_UK_1 Living with a spouse or partner 0 no, 1 yes
85. Children_under18 Live with children under 18 (children and grandchildren) 0 no, 1 yes
86. householdsize_adults How many of the people in your household are over 18? 1-5 or more
87. profile_household_size_cat How many people, including yourself, are there in your household? Please include both adults and children. 1- 8 or more
88. profile_household_children How many of the people in your household are under 18? 0-5 or more
89. profile_house_tenure Do you own or rent the home in which you live? 1 own outright, 2 own with a mortgage, 3 through shared ownership, 4 rent from a private landlord, 5 rent from a local authority, 6 rent from a housing association, 7 live with partents/family but pay some rent, 8 live with parents/family rent free, 9 other
90. profile_marital What is your current marital or relationship status? 1 married, 2 in a civil partnership, 3 separated but still legally joined, 4 live with a partner but not married or in a civil partnership, 5 in a relationship but not living together, 6 single, 7 divorced, 8 widowed
91. ethnicity_new What ethnic group best describes you? Please select one option only. (We ask the question in this way so that it is consistent with Census definitions.) 1 English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British, 2 Irish 3 Gypsy

or Irish Traveller, 4 any other white background, 5 white and black Caribbean, 6 white and black African, 7 white and Asian, 8 any other mixed/ multiple ethnic background, 9 Indian, 10 Pakistani, 11 Bangladeshi, 12 Chinese, 13 any other Asian background, 14 African, 15 Caribbean, 16 any other Black/African/Caribbean background, 17 Arab, 18 any other ethnic group, 19 prefer not to say

92. age What is your age?
93. profile_gender sex (male or female) 1 Male, 2 Female

Appendix C: Logistic Regressions of Food Insecurity and Food Club Use

*Significant at p<.05, 95% confidence. **Significant at p<.01, 99% confidence.

A: Food Insecurity Logistic Regression	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% odds	Sig.
Income (continuous variable, capped at £40k gross household income)			
Income (5K category increase)	.794	-20.6%	<.001**
Income source (Reference group: Paid employment only)			
Employment and benefits	1.043	NS	.643
Income from benefits only	1.138	NS	.314
Pension	.987	NS	.932
Other	.805	NS	.101
Work status (reference group: work full-time (30+ hours a week))			
Part-time (less than 30 hours a week)	.578	-42.2%	<.001**
Unemployed, not working	.587	-41.3%	<.001**
Retired	.369	-63.1%	<.001**
Student, other	.741	-25.9%	.032*
Region (Reference group is London)			
Other English Regions	.913	NS	.472
Scotland	.927	NS	.709
IMD (Reference group: IMD 3)			
IMD quintile 1	1.163	NS	.060
IMD quintile 2	1.006	NS	.942
Urban-Rural (Reference group: Urban)			
Town and Fringe	1.053	NS	.665
Rural	.969	NS	.750
Housing (Reference group: Own home outright)			
Mortgage or shared ownership	1.396	39.6%	.002**
Rent-private landlord	1.856	85.6%	<.001**
Rent-local authority or housing association	1.869	86.9%	<.001**
Other housing situation	1.367	36.7%	.035*
Fruits and Vegetables within 20 20-minute walk (Reference group: Yes)			
No shop with Fruit and vegetables	1.358	35.8%	.004**
Quality of fruits and vegetables at the usual shop (Reference group: Very Good)			

A: Food Insecurity Logistic Regression	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% odds	Sig.
Good	.953	NS	.500
Poor	1.636	63.6%	<.001**
Very Poor	2.737	173.7%	<.001**
Cooking skill (Reference: Very Good)			
Good	.765	-23.5%	.002**
Average	.676	-32.4%	<.001**
Poor	.736	-26.4%	.019'
Very Poor	.555	-44.5%	.008**
Mental Health (continuous variable where 0=extremely poor and 10=excellent)			
Mental Health	.917	-8.3%	<.001**
Physical Health (continuous variable where 0=extremely poor and 10=excellent)			
Physical Health	.965	-3.5%	.025*
Disability (Reference group: Those who are in other employment categories who may or may not have a LTHC)			
Not working due to LTHC	1.650	65.0%	<.001**
Live Alone (Reference group: no)			
Live alone	.924	NS	.277
Full-time care responsibility for someone with a LTHC or disability (Reference group: no full-time responsibility)			
Care responsibility	1.736	73.6%	<.001**
Financial Resilience (ability to afford an unexpected £100 expense without borrowing - reference group: yes, I can)			
Unable to afford a £100 expense	6.170	517.0%	<.001**
Feel Supported by others (continuous variable where 0=not at all and 10= extremely supported)			
Feel Supported	.933	-6.7%	<.001**
Ethnicity (Reference Group: White UK Nationalities)			
Other white ethnicities	.976	NS	.864
Mixed ethnicities	1.416	NS	.057
Asian ethnicities	1.361	36.1%	.049*
Other non-white ethnicities	1.410	41.0%	.044*
Gender (Reference group: Male)			
Female	.844	-16.6%	.007**
Age (continuous variable from young to older)			
Age	.977	-2.3%	<.001**

A: Food Insecurity Logistic Regression	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% odds	Sig.
Presence of children (Reference group: no children)			
One or two children in the household	1.151	NS	.110
Three or more children in the household	1.505	50.5%	.017*

B: Food club logistical regression	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% change in likelihood	Sig.
Ethnicity (Reference group: White UK national ethnicities)			
Other white ethnicities	.786	NS	.262
Mixed ethnicities	1.348	NS	.212
Asian ethnicities	.839	NS	.449
Other non-white ethnicities	1.387	NS	.142
Gender (Reference group: Male)			
Female	1.271	27.1%	.005**
Age (continuous variable from young to older)			
Age	.983	-1.7%	<.001**
Presence of children (Reference group: no children)			
1 or 2 children in the household	1.938	93.8%	<.001**
Three or more children in the household	2.504	150.4%	<.001**
Full-time care responsibility for someone with a LTHC or disability (Reference group: no full-time responsibility)			
Care responsibility	1.583	58.3%	<.001*
Work status (Reference group: work full time (30+ hours a week)			
Part-time (less than 30 hours a week)	1.329	32.9%	.028*
Unemployed, not working	.881	NS	.525
Retired	1.149	NS	.464
Student, other	.743	NS	.175
Disability (Reference group: Those who are in other employment categories who may or may not have a LTHC)			
Not working due to LTHC	1.161	NS	.487
Household Income source (Reference group: Paid employment only)			
Employment and benefits	1.357	35.7%	.017*
Income from benefits only	2.032	103.2%	<.001**

Pension	1.476	47.6%	.032*
None of these	1.093	NS	.622
Income (continuous variable, capped at £40k gross household income)			
Income	.921	-7.9%	<.001**
Financial Resilience (ability to afford an unexpected £100 expense without borrowing - reference group: yes, I can)			
Unable to afford a £100 expense	1.131	NS	.215
Housing (Reference group: Own home outright)			
Mortgage or shared ownership	.942	NS	.664
Rent - private landlord	.918	NS	.524
Rent - local authority or housing association	1.293	29.3%	.027*
Other housing situation	.813	NS	.346
IMD (Reference group: IMD 3)			
IMD quintile 1	1.485	48.5%	<.001**
IMD quintile 2	1.411	41.1%	.002**
Population density (Reference group: Urban)			
Town and Fringe	1.235	NS	.139
Rural	.976	NS	.894
Food security (Reference group: Food Secure)			
Food insecure	1.814	81.4%	<.001**
Cooking Skill (Reference group: Very good)			
Good	.628		<.001**
Average	.549		<.001**
Poor	.400		<.001**
Very Poor	.415		.014*

Variable category	Exp(B) (Odds ratio)	% change in likelihood	Sig.
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