

# Hampshire Food Alliance



## **From Awareness to Action** **November 2025** **Workshop Summary**

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# Hampshire Food Alliance (HFA) Update


The Hampshire Food Alliance began with a need; to address rising food insecurity across the county in a coordinated, inclusive, and sustainable way. This journey formally began in November 2024, when a county-wide workshop brought people together from across a range of sectors to share knowledge of what work people were doing, what experience told us needed to be achieved and shared insights and ideas of how things could possibly progress.

That initial engagement laid the foundation for what has become the HFA. From that single event, we've built a structure that supports collaboration, action, and accountability.

We've developed shared priorities:

### Priorities

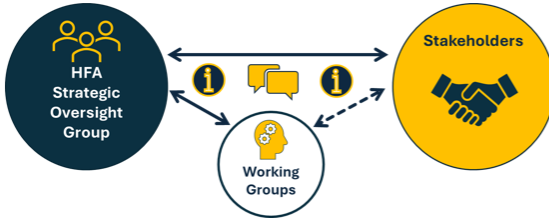
- 1. Access and Accessibility:** Ensuring that everyone can access nutritious, good quality food and essential services, regardless of their circumstances.
- 2. Community Engagement:** Empowering local communities to actively shape the services and support they receive, with a strong emphasis on inclusion and mutual respect.
- 3. Education and Awareness:** Promote lifelong learning and informed communities..
- 4. Sustainability & Funding:** Create long-term, stable support systems by developing an understanding of the unique needs of residents, volunteers and organisations.
- 5. Building Sustainable Food Systems:** Address how food is produced, distributed, and consumed in a way that is environmentally and socially responsible.



And a structure to support this work:


### HFA Structure

**Strategic Oversight Group:** Members will include a range of representatives from diverse sectors and partnerships, that represent the wider stakeholders. They will have oversight of the outcomes of working groups and workshops to identify actions and next steps.



**Stakeholders:** Join **Workshops** and **Working Groups**. All stakeholders from any sector, join sessions to learn, inform priorities, develop actions, share diverse knowledge and experiences.

**Working Groups:** Established for specific tasks, resulting from **Stakeholder** engagement, have defined start and end dates. Participants can join based on their interest, expertise, or relevance to their work, organisation or project function.



We have established a Strategic Oversight Group, a multi sector group that will ensure the work remains aligned with, and responsive to, the needs of Hampshire's communities. This work will be guided by evidence and community voices that come from you, our stakeholders. Through workshops and working groups, we want to bring your lived experience and expertise to develop shared plans and to shape our actions.

**What started as a conversation has become a county-wide alliance, driven by the belief that no one should face hunger or food insecurity.**



## Workshop Overview

On 05 November 2025, the Hampshire Food Alliance held its second workshop. The workshop's focus was about strengthening pathways to prevent food insecurity before it reaches crisis point. The aim was to explore how individuals and communities can better connect with support early, identify barriers, and build stigma-free, preventative approaches. The workshop encouraged adopting a prevention-first mindset, applying systems thinking to understand structural and social factors, and collaboratively reviewing known assets and highlighting gaps in support networks. Systems thinking encouraged looking at the big picture—how services, policies, and behaviors interact—rather than isolated issues.

The HFA was proud to welcome over 60 participants to the workshop, bringing together expertise from more than 30 different sectors. Representation spanned organisations from frontline food support services such as community pantries and food banks to Local Food Partnerships, voluntary and community groups, councils, education providers, health, social prescribers, housing, businesses, to name just a few. The diversity of voices created a rich and collaborative environment.

We were joined at the workshop by two guest speakers.



**Andrew Forsey** OBE, Feeding Britain, National Director shared insights and progress that have been made in the past year to strengthen three essential safety nets designed to prevent families and individuals from falling into hunger and hardship.

**Social Safety Net:** Government commitments include fairer Universal Credit repayment rates, a £15 weekly UC increase by the end of the parliament, automatic recording of benefit assessments, reforms to standing charges on pay-as-you-go meters, and an expanded Warm Home Discount. We await decisions on lifting the two-child limit, but further work is needed to bolster household budgets.

**Nutritional Safety Net:** Successes include securing long-term HAF funding and ensuring all children in poverty are eligible for free school meals, with automatic enrolment and Healthy Start expected in the forthcoming child poverty strategy.

**Local Safety Net:** The three-year Crisis and Resilience Fund has been agreed. With this comes the hope of being able to strengthen food clubs and co-located services, reducing reliance on emergency food parcels. Evidence shows food clubs improve diets, reduce isolation, and cut food bank use—three-quarters of members worry less about food, eat more fruit and vegetables, two-thirds are skipping meals less often and half access wider support to address underlying causes. More than 80% feel more connected to their community, and less isolated or cut off than before.

Encouragingly, recent reports suggest food bank demand is falling as food clubs grow. Continued investment in these three safety nets offers real hope for further reductions in food insecurity.



**Jonathan Baker** the HCC Consultation and Engagement Manager, spoke about a community research report that was undertaken about Food insecurity in Ethnic Minority Groups (February 2025), explaining the research was undertaken with 46 people from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

The aim was to understand how to increase the uptake of food insecurity support among ethnic minority communities in Hampshire. To achieve this, the study explored potential obstacles that might prevent people from using or accessing food banks and community pantries. By identifying these barriers, the goal was to inform changes that could make these support offers more inclusive and culturally appropriate.

The findings revealed that there were shared themes that spanned across people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures. Some of the findings were;

#### **Shame and Stigma as Early Barriers**

- Internal shame (feeling weak or failing) and external shame (fear of judgment) prevent people from seeking help early.

#### **Lack of Awareness of Support Systems**

- Many were unaware of what support exists, how it works, or who is eligible.

#### **Community Leaders as Gateways**

- Community and faith leaders can provide “permission” to seek help but may also carry unintended barriers to access.

#### **Cultural Expectations and Self-Reliance**

- Many respondents described cultural norms around self-reliance, especially among older people and men.

#### **Isolation and Lack of Connection**

- New arrivals and ethnic minorities can often lack community connections that could guide them to support.

#### **Language and Practical Barriers**

- Language barriers, transport issues, and childcare responsibilities prevent early access.

#### **Desire to Contribute**

- People want to give back, even when at risk of hardship.

## **Workshop Goal**

The workshop aimed to explore how individuals and communities can access support before reaching crisis point, identify barriers, and begin to think about practical, stigma-free pathways for prevention. Activities focused on understanding diverse needs, mapping existing resources, and generating ideas for better connections. By understanding this it lays the groundwork to build on collaboration, a framework that unites and strengthens prevention pathways across Hampshire.

## **Workshop Activities**

To explore diverse viewpoints, attendees worked in groups, each adopting a distinct persona that remained consistent across all tasks. These were used in three interactive activities:



### 1. Walking in Their Shoes

To identify what support or knowledge individuals need before reaching crisis. This aimed to uncover diverse needs, early touchpoints, and barriers such as stigma or lack of awareness.

### 2. Support Mapping

Participants mapped known existing resources and identified gaps in provision. They considered why current support might not be accessed and discussed ways to reduce stigma and improve accessibility.

### 3. From Questions to Connections

Building on previous activities, groups explored practical ideas for connecting people to services earlier and more effectively. They identified early indicators of need and suggested actions for embedding preventative approaches into everyday practice.

## Key Insights from the Workshop

The snapshot below is a glimpse into the rich mix of insights and ideas generated during the workshop, there were many more.



Access challenges are multi-dimensional, including:

- **Language barriers** and **digital exclusion**.
- **Fear of stigma** and **lack of confidence**.
- **Fragmented information** and **poor awareness of services**.
- **Transport** and **childcare constraints**.



There are shared challenges across sectors, including:

- **Funding instability**: Short-term grants hinder sustainability.
- **Workforce knowledge gaps**: Inconsistent signposting and limited training.
- **Fragmented systems**: No centralised source or directory for professionals and residents for all services.



Consistent themes were talked about, including:

- **Isolation** and **lack of confidence** prevent engagement.
- Residents want to **give back**, suggesting volunteer and skills-sharing opportunities.
- A **holistic approach** is needed: food insecurity intersects with housing, mental health, financial stress and more.



- **Employer-based signposting** and wellbeing initiatives.
- **Community champions** and local directories for navigation.
- **Digital** and **physical information hubs** in libraries and community spaces.
- **Peer-to-peer models** to reduce stigma and build trust.
- **Peer support models** and informal spaces.
- **Positive messaging** (“everyone struggles”).
- **Co-location of services** to normalise help-seeking.



## Stakeholder Recommendations

The activity discussions resulted with many valuable recommendations, some of which were:

**To strengthen early intervention:** Develop clear pathways for prevention & train frontline staff to spot early signs and signpost effectively.

**Improve access and inclusion:** Expand digital literacy programmes and provide offline alternatives. Introduce language support services (translation tools, multilingual materials).

**Build integrated information systems:** Create a centralised, up-to-date directory of support services for professionals and residents. Promote through community networks and hubs.

**Reduce Stigma:** Use peer-led models and informal settings to normalise help-seeking. Launch positive messaging campaigns.

**Secure Sustainable Funding:** Advocate for long-term funding for preventative initiatives. Encourage collaborative funding models across sectors.

**Enhance Service Design:** Expand co-location of services e.g. food hubs + advice + mental health. Offer flexible access (evenings/weekends) for working families.

**Stakeholders emphasised prevention is critical.** A shift being necessary from crisis response to earlier intervention. Suggested strategies included:

- Cash-first approaches to maximise benefit entitlement.
- Employer engagement for health, wellbeing and support signposting.
- Education on budgeting and cooking to build resilience.

**From feedback received during and after the workshop, there was a key statement that kept reoccurring ....**

“ Although we came from different areas in the County and from different types of organisations, the experience was mainly similar ”

“ No matter what person you are trying to reach or what organisation you are from all the challenges are very similar ”

“It would appear similar issues are being faced by multiple organisations across the county, and similar ideas were shared around how to tackle these ”

“ Even though we were from relatively different settings our outlooks and challenges were similar. ”

“ I was most surprised to discover that, despite our diverse professional backgrounds, we encounter similar challenges on a daily basis ”



The reference is clear, but feedback received when asked what peoples key take aways from the workshop was, sums it up .....

“ That we are all thinking the same things, and we need to work together to make it happen. ”

### Next Steps

- Further analysis of the workshop discussions.
- We'll contact everyone who registered interest in joining the working group.
- Development of a short survey to understand how Hampshire residents access support and how to tailor messaging to their needs.

### Get Involved

It's not too late to get involved!

- Join the multi-agency working group.
- Recommend suggestions for the Prevention First Approach.
- Suggest questions for the upcoming survey.
- Register to receive the survey to share with your clients, members, volunteers, and staff.

Just complete this link: [Hampshire Food Alliance - Get Involved – Fill in form](#)



**Everyone's voice is important!**



## Conclusion

The workshop reinforced that food insecurity is a complex, multi-dimensional issue requiring holistic solutions. It also showed the value of dedicated time for cross-sector discussions.

The insights, including those not captured in this report, will shape a plan supported by a multi-agency working group. While we can't tackle everything at once, the Strategic Oversight Group and the Working Group will concentrate on selecting a few recommendations that are result focused - laying the foundation for long-term change and shaping the future direction of the prevention work

The workshop was more than a discussion; it was a platform for building relationships and identifying new connections. Participants discovered common challenges and shared aspirations, reinforcing that no single organisation can tackle food insecurity alone. Crucially, the event underscored a shared understanding across sectors: **similar challenges demand collective action**. Participants agreed that early intervention, sustainable funding, and stigma-free pathways are essential to shift from crisis response to prevention.

The HFA will continue to collaborate to create a resilient, inclusive system that empowers communities. This will remain central to shaping Hampshire's prevention-first approach, creating accessible pathways for support before crisis hits - while also aiding recovery and reducing relapse. This collective effort will not only prevent hardship but strengthen wellbeing and social cohesion across the county.

**The Hampshire Food Alliance would like to express its sincere thanks to everyone who contributes - whether through workshop discussions or conversations beyond them. We can make the difference with collective action.**

