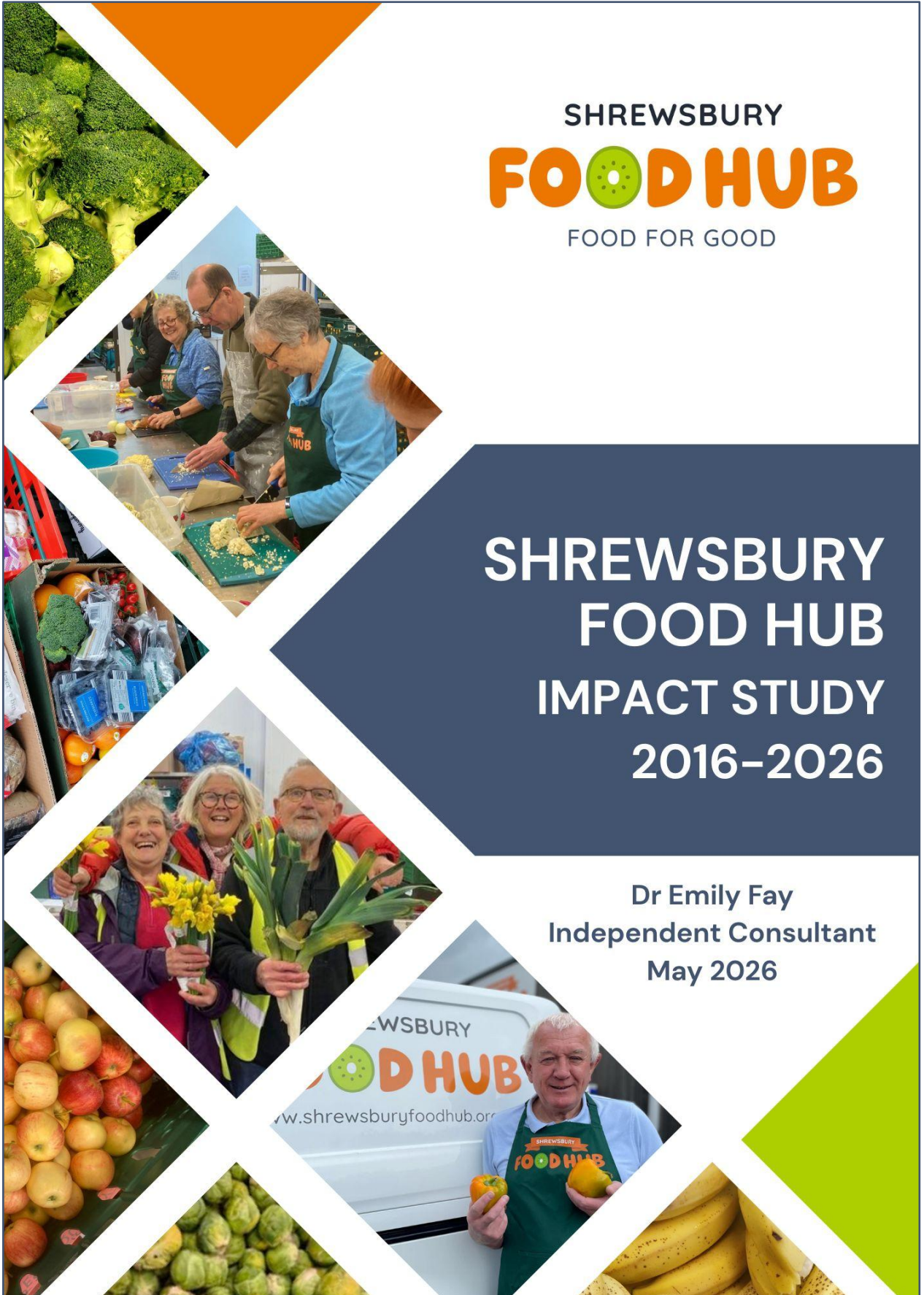


SHREWSBURY FOOD HUB IMPACT STUDY 2016–2026

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May 2026



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Preface

In 2016, our first steps were taken when founders Ali and Katy were asked by M&S in Shrewsbury to find a home for good food that they were about to throw away. The response was positive and Shrewsbury Food Hub was born well before similar focused organisations popped up across the country.

The idea developed quickly into the Shrewsbury Food Hub with the mission to *redistribute surplus food and promote food waste reduction for environmental and social good*.

Today the Hub distributes over 250 tonnes of food a year. It is an established charity with a budget of over £400,000, paid staff, vehicles, a depot and an army of over 200 energetic volunteers reaching more than 4,000 people every week (around 5% of Shrewsbury's population). What a story!

Whilst we have always collected data on food rescued and reported regularly to our supporters and donors, we know that we need to better understand our impact.

We all instinctively understand the power of food to bring people together in a good way, to lubricate and sustain community initiatives, and to satisfy our innate belief that waste is wrong. The many inspiring stories we share illustrate that.

But can we measure our impact to show the difference we are making? In social sector jargon, can we calculate our social return on investment? Answering these questions will strengthen the case we make to grant-makers and help us to learn and improve our services.

Ten years old feels like the right moment to commission this study. We are delighted that Dr Emily Fay agreed to take on the task. She is an established expert in the food poverty sector with many years' experience working across Shropshire and with a background in public health, evaluation and research.

Dr Fay was given a wide brief to look at environmental and social considerations but also to look beyond these obvious areas. As a result, she has unearthed some very interesting revelations.

Finally, a huge thank-you to all those who contributed to this exercise and, of course, to the hundreds of people involved day after day in delivering on our mission.

We hope you enjoy the report.

Tammy Bloodworth, CEO Shrewsbury Food Hub – May 2026

www.shrewsburyfoodhub.org.uk

Acknowledgements

This report would not have been possible without the contribution of the many individuals and organisations who support and engage with Shrewsbury Food Hub. We would like to thank the staff and volunteers whose commitment, insight and day-to-day work underpin everything the Hub achieves. We are particularly grateful to the wide network of community groups, partners and suppliers across Shropshire who shared their experiences and data, helping to bring this report to life. Their openness and collaboration reflect the strength of the local food system and the collective effort to reduce food waste and support communities. Finally, we would like to thank the Steering Group and everyone who took part in interviews, surveys and case studies. Your voices and experiences are at the heart of this report and its findings.

Glossary

Ambient food: Food that can be stored safely at room temperature, such as tinned, dried or packaged goods.

Best Before date: Indicates quality rather than safety. Food is often still safe to eat after this date if stored correctly.

Carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e): A standard unit for measuring greenhouse gas emissions, combining different gases (like methane and CO₂) based on their impact on climate change.

FareShare: A UK charity that redistributes surplus food from the food industry to charities and community groups across the UK.

Food insecurity: Lack of reliable access to sufficient, affordable and nutritious food.

Foodshare: An open-access community session where surplus food is shared with anyone who attends, for a small, suggested donation.

Food waste: Food that is discarded or not used, despite being safe and edible.

Gleaning: Collecting leftover crops from fields after harvest to prevent them going to waste.

IMD (Index of Multiple Deprivation): A measure used in the UK to identify areas of relative deprivation based on factors such as income, health, education and housing.

Surplus food: Food that cannot be sold (e.g. due to nearing expiry or overproduction) but is still safe and good to eat.

Use By date: A safety date. Food should not be eaten after this date as it may pose a health risk.

WRAP (Waste and Resources Action Programme): A UK organisation that works on reducing waste and promoting sustainable resource use.

Executive Summary

Strong foundations for lasting impact

Over the past decade, Shrewsbury Food Hub has developed from a small local initiative into a trusted and respected registered charity (CIO), working in close partnership with a wide range of organisations across Shropshire. This growth has been underpinned by a clear sense of purpose and strong values-led approach to delivery, which has shaped both strategic direction and day-to-day practice.

The scale of impact is significant. Over the past ten years, the Hub has transformed surplus food into substantial environmental and social value:-

- **1,492 tonnes** of food redistributed
- equivalent to over **3.5 million meals**
- **4,043 tonnes of CO₂ emissions** prevented
- **£6 million+** in food value generated for communities and organisations
- **4,000 people** reached per week
- through a network of over **100 community groups**
- powered by more than **230 volunteers**

In 2025/26, **£1 invested in the Food Hub generated at least £5.21 in social value**, demonstrating a strong return on investment alongside significant community benefit.

- **83% of partner groups** reporting reduced operating costs
- over **50%** relying on the Hub for more than **60%** of their food provision.

The model therefore delivers not only environmental benefit but also clear and measurable social value including creating savings to Shrewsbury residents weekly shopping bills in the cost of living crisis.

Food acts as a catalyst for connection, enabling community organisations to extend their reach, build trust, and engage individuals who may otherwise be excluded from support. As a result, the Hub contributes not only to addressing immediate food need, but also to improving wellbeing, reducing isolation, and strengthening community resilience.

Alongside this, the Hub plays an important role in supporting health and nutrition. **46% of all food redistributed is fresh fruit and vegetables**, and the overall mix broadly reflects national healthy eating guidance. This contributes to improved dietary quality, particularly for lower-income households, alongside wider benefits for health and wellbeing.

Strong internal systems underpin delivery. The Hub operates from a purpose-built depot with a five-star food hygiene rating, supported by robust food safety processes, trained volunteers,

and full traceability for chilled and frozen food. Governance is provided by a skilled 8-member trustee board with expertise spanning food systems, public health, environment, finance, carbon reduction and organisational development. Together, these structures ensure the organisation is safe, accountable and well positioned for continued growth.

This significant and sustained impact has been widely recognised. The organisation has received a Queen's Award for Voluntary Service, and in 2024 founders Ali Thomas and Katy Anderson were awarded honorary Master's degrees by the University of Chester in recognition of their leadership and contribution to tackling food waste.

Operational pressures and sustainability

The organisation is operating in an increasingly challenging environment, with rising depot, logistics, and other costs. As the operation grows, there is a corresponding need for continued investment in volunteers, vans and operational systems to maintain the Hub model without compromising impact or values.

Looking ahead: challenges and opportunities

Marking its 10th anniversary provides a moment to reflect on what has been achieved and look ahead to a future where even more food is valued, less is wasted, and communities are better connected and supported. As the Hub enters its second decade, there is a clear opportunity to build on strong foundations while responding to emerging operational, social and system-level pressures.

Scaling a proven model

Shrewsbury Food Hub has developed a highly effective model for surplus food redistribution, creating strong potential for further scaling and replication. This includes increasing the volume of food redistributed, expanding Community Kitchen activity, and making fuller use of existing depot and logistics capacity to extend reach and deepen impact across Shropshire.

As the Hub grows, ongoing organisational development will be essential. The Hub is already moving towards a more data-informed approach to delivery and decision-making, supported by strengthening systems and processes that enable effective growth. This evolution will be important in supporting scale, improving learning, and enhancing the organisation's ability to evidence impact.

At the same time, it will be critical to preserve what makes the organisation distinctive. Maintaining its values-led culture, community focus and relational approach must remain central as systems become more structured and operational demands increase. The key task ahead is ensuring that greater scale and sophistication continue to be firmly rooted in the same ethos that has driven the Hub's success to date.

Measuring and evidencing impact

As the organisation grows, strengthening approaches to impact measurement will be increasingly important. The open-access nature of the model is central to its inclusivity and reach, but it also makes outcomes more complex to define and capture. There is a clear opportunity to further develop data collection, monitoring and evaluation systems to better evidence community benefit, including impacts beyond food distribution itself such as wellbeing, reduced isolation, improved nutrition and strengthened community resilience.

This will support learning, improve decision-making, and strengthen the organisation's ability to demonstrate value to partners and funders.

Expanding food system impact

Looking ahead, there is clear opportunity to further strengthen the wider system impact role Shrewsbury Food Hub has. The organisation is increasingly moving beyond food redistribution alone, with the Community Kitchen supporting deeper, more sustained engagement with individuals and communities.

The role the Hub plays around education, both on reducing food waste and building cooking skills, and improving wellbeing, confidence and strengthening social connection and participation, could be expanded further to increase social impact.

This shift would help contribute to longer-term preventative outcomes, including improved nutrition, healthier eating habits and greater food independence. There are also opportunities to further expand the geographical reach of the organisation across the county, exploring opportunities to reach new communities with food.

As these more relational models of engagement develop, the Hub is well positioned to play an even greater role in shaping a more integrated, preventative and sustainable local food system, where surplus food acts as a catalyst for wider social and health impact.

1.0 Introduction

Why is Shrewsbury Food Hub needed?

Food waste is a significant environmental and social challenge, with far-reaching impacts across the food system. WRAP's most recent estimates show that 10.2 million tonnes of food go to waste annually in the UK, enough to feed the entire population three meals a day for 11 weeks (Source: WRAP). Much of this food is nutritious and could help to **fill bellies rather than bins**.

When edible food is discarded, it contributes substantially to climate change. Food sent to landfill generates methane, a greenhouse gas far more potent than carbon dioxide, and across Europe food waste is responsible for millions of tonnes of emissions annually.

At the same time, increasing cost pressures for both households and community organisations mean that **budgets are stretched**. Many households struggle to afford a nutritious diet, with increasing levels of food insecurity across the UK. The community infrastructure supporting residents is under considerable strain, and budgets for activities involving food are often the first to be cut.

Many supermarkets have schemes which enable local community groups to collect their surplus food, rather than it going to waste. **Surplus food** from supermarkets and other suppliers is food which is nearing its **Use By** date or past its **Best Before** date. This food, which sits between being sellable and becoming waste, is often of good quality and nutritious, and when offered to the community, can be a valuable resource.

However, the availability of surplus food is unpredictable. Often there are large amounts of one item: far too much for one community group to use within a short time scale.

2.0 Study Methodology

This impact assessment was conducted by an external consultant in March/April 2026. The study used a mixed-methods approach to capture the environmental, social, volunteer and system-wide impact of the organisation over its ten years of activity.

The study combined quantitative analysis of existing organisational data with qualitative insights from stakeholders, ensuring both the scale of impact and the lived experience behind it were understood.

The research began with a review of internal data, including food redistribution volumes, volunteer engagement, partnerships and programme delivery, to assess the reach and operational scale of the organisation. This was complemented by stakeholder engagement, including interviews and discussions with staff, volunteers, community groups, suppliers and key partners, to explore the broader benefits and outcomes of the work.

To deepen understanding, the study also included observation of core activities such as Foodshares and Community Kitchen sessions, alongside mapping of the organisation's delivery model and partnership network.

The assessment is structured around four key areas of impact: environmental (reducing food waste and carbon emissions), social (improving access to food, wellbeing and connection), volunteer (skills, wellbeing and community engagement), and system-wide (strengthening partnerships and local food resilience).

Data sources included organisational records, site visits, and survey responses from volunteers (112 responses across two surveys), young volunteers (9 responses), and community groups (40 responses), alongside discussions with 18 key informants (for a full list see Appendix A).

3.0 Shrewsbury Food Hub: Overview

3.1 Contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)



Figure 1: UN SDGs

Shrewsbury Food Hub's work delivers against seven United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), demonstrating how locally rooted action contributes to global priorities:

- **SDG 1: No Poverty & SDG 2: Zero Hunger:** Improving access to nutritious food, reducing financial pressure, and supporting vulnerable groups through an inclusive, non-stigmatising model.
- **SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing:** Supporting physical and mental wellbeing through access to healthy food, social connection, and cooking skills.
- **SDG 10: Reduced Inequalities:** Reaching both the wider community and those most disadvantaged, including people facing homelessness, low income and social exclusion.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Strengthening local resilience through the Hub model and bringing communities together.
- **SDG 12: Responsible Consumption and Production:** Preventing nearly 1,500 tonnes of food from going to waste and encouraging behaviour change around food use.
- **SDG 13: Climate Action:** Mitigating over 4,000 tonnes of CO₂e emissions by diverting food from landfill.

3.2 How the Hub helps

In 2016, founders Katy Anderson and Ali Thomas wanted to start a project to reduce food waste. They talked to local groups collecting surplus food and found that whilst the food was useful, it was often going to waste as they were overwhelmed with surplus they couldn't use.

They thought that a 'Hub' model could be the solution to sharing surplus food between groups, matching the available food to groups who could put it to good use, so that no food went to waste. They started by collecting food from three supermarkets and sharing it with five community groups. A decade later, Shrewsbury Food Hub operates seven days a week, collecting from 74 suppliers, with food shared with 100 community groups (see Appendix C for a timeline of the Hub's development).

Shrewsbury Food Hub's mission is to **redistribute surplus food and to promote food waste reduction for environmental and social good**. Powered by more than 230 volunteers and 10 staff, its vision is to **create a community where food is valued and not wasted**.

3.3 How Shrewsbury Food Hub uses surplus food for environmental and social good

- **A well-established logistics network:** Shrewsbury Food Hub has established a large logistics network, which safely transports surplus food from suppliers to the community. Volunteers start at 7am daily to collect surplus from 74 suppliers, with established routes, regularly driven by the same volunteers, which help build community trust and ensure familiar faces connect with people consistently, including local supermarkets and manufacturers.
- **Maximising surplus food supply:** This food is supplemented by surplus shared by other local surplus food organisations, and with surplus fruit and vegetables purchased from FareShare in Birmingham to increase the nutritional offer. Seasonally, volunteers also go out in the local area to pick fruits and vegetables to prevent them from going to waste. All this food is brought to the depot to be sorted and distributed to or collected by community groups.
- **A strong “Network of Kindness”:** The food is shared out across the community via a network of kindness which ensures food gets into **bellies not bins**. Food is shared with over 100 community groups, including Foodshares which are open to everyone, community fridges and freezers, many of which were purchased by Shrewsbury Food Hub to provide local groups with refrigerated storage that enables them to receive and distribute surplus food safely, and groups which support people with the greatest needs in the community.
- **Balancing environmental and social impact:** This model ensures that the food is used for both environmental and social good. Most of the food is available to all, but some is reserved for those who will benefit from it most.
- **Transforming surplus through the Community Kitchen:** Some of the surplus is used in the Community Kitchen next door to the depot, a high-quality, fully equipped training space. **Veg on the edge** is processed into soups and other meals, which are then frozen to be sent out to community freezers. Surplus is also used in cooking sessions which build skills, confidence and social connection for community groups, and in catering for community events.
- **Driving behaviour change through education:** Surplus food is used as a powerful educational tool, challenging perceptions of food waste and showing that food often discarded can still be nutritious, safe, and delicious. Through campaigns, school

workshops, and initiatives like the Taste with No Waste challenge, Shrewsbury Food Hub promotes practical, nonjudgemental behaviour change, helping individuals and organisations reduce food waste, save money, and lower environmental impact.

- **Improving nutrition across the community:** The surplus helps to **nourish the local community**. In 2025/26 46% of food shared was fresh fruit and vegetables, 28% bakery items, and the remainder made up of calorie-dense foods, including dairy, ready meals and meat, fish and eggs. Access to this mix of foods helps improve the nutritional quality of diets, particularly for those on lower incomes.
- **Maintaining the highest food safety standards:** Ensuring **food safety** is core to the Hub's operation. It operates from a purpose-built depot, occupying two adjoining units within the Shropshire Food Enterprise Centre, with a five-star food hygiene rating, supported by robust systems, trained volunteers and rigorous processes to ensure safe handling and full traceability of chilled and frozen food.
- **Strengthening long-term food resilience:** Shrewsbury Food Hub uses surplus food as a catalyst to strengthen local food resilience. By fostering collaboration, sharing expertise, and connecting networks across Shropshire, it helps create a more coordinated, resilient food system that can respond to need and crisis situations.

Environmental and Social Impact Headline Numbers



Source: Shrewsbury Food Hub internal data



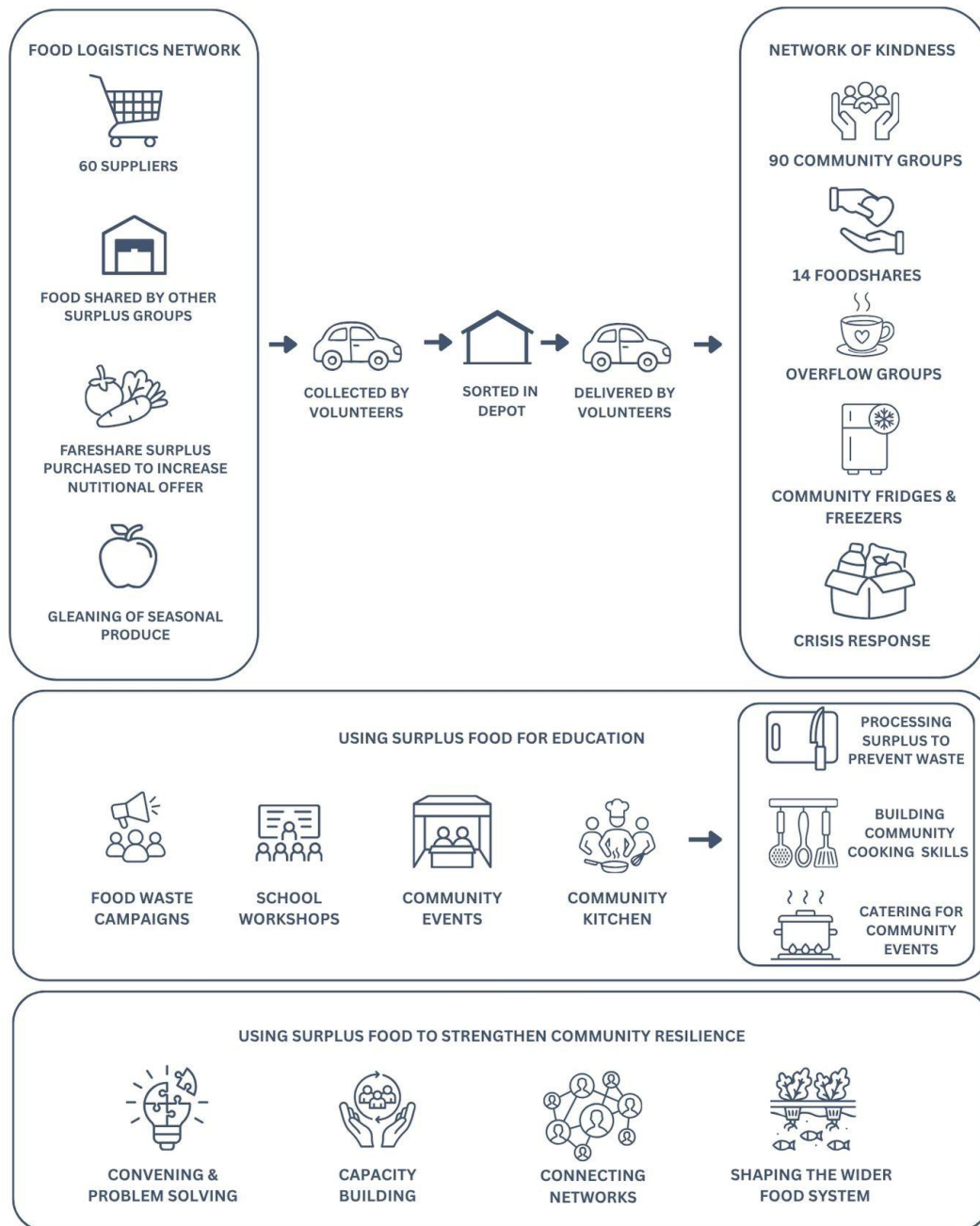


Figure 2: What the Hub Does

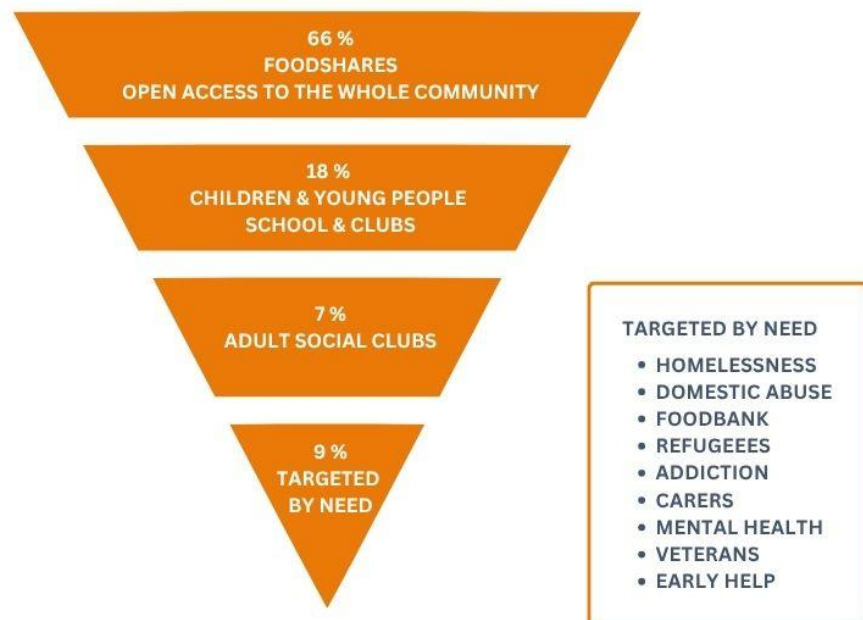
3.4 The Network of Kindness

Shrewsbury Food Hub currently shares food with over 100 community groups. Analysis of Food Hub data in 2026 shows that two-thirds of the food shared is available to anyone in the community via Foodshares. The remaining third is shared with specific community groups supporting a wide range of children and adults locally.

WHO SHREWSBURY FOOD HUB SHARES FOOD WITH

OPEN ACCESS FOR ALL, WITH TARGETED SUPPORT FOR THOSE WHO NEED IT MOST

MOST OF THE FOOD IS AVAILABLE TO EVERYONE IN THE COMMUNITY, WHILE A SMALLER PROPORTION IS DIRECTED TO ORGANISATIONS SUPPORTING PEOPLE EXPERIENCING THE GREATEST NEED



WHY THIS MODEL MATTERS



Figure 3: Food Hub Share Pyramid

3.5 Foodshares: open access to the whole community

Two thirds of the surplus food Shrewsbury Food Hub shares is available to the whole community, via Foodshares. Each Foodshare is run by a local community group at settings which are known, accessible and safe, with their own volunteers. Running every day, in a variety of locations, these settings are open to all, with a suggested donation of £2.

When there is extra food available, additional ‘pop-up’ Foodshares run in neighbourhoods, often outside someone’s house. The flexibility of the model means food can be shared widely, safely and quickly.

Foodshares are very different from food banks. Their open-access model creates inclusive spaces, where people can access food without stigma. Messaging ensures that people come to Foodshares for a wide variety of reasons. Some want to reduce food waste; others are in financial need. The universal offer and the suggested donation help to reduce stigma and encourage participation.



3.6 Children and Young people: Schools and Clubs

Nearly 20% of the food shared by Shrewsbury Food Hub goes to organisations supporting children and young people. These include 19 schools, 4 preschools, and 11 youth organisations, enabling them to integrate surplus food into their everyday activities.

This includes breakfast and after-school clubs, cookery sessions, youth drop-ins, family support, and community events. In many cases, food is also shared directly with pupils and families, particularly those experiencing financial hardship.

3.7 Adult Social Groups

Approximately 7% of the food goes out to 16 adult social clubs and support groups. The Food Hub supports a wide range of adult social groups, from Warm spaces and coffee mornings to church groups, day services and community hubs.

These spaces bring together older adults, carers, families and local residents, often providing vital support for those experiencing loneliness, isolation or ill health. Some groups serve ready-made soup made in the Community Kitchen; others enjoy surplus cakes and pastries alongside a cup of tea or coffee.

Some groups also create food parcels, kettle bags and other support packages, and use produce for fundraising activities such as making preserves.

3.8 Specialist Support Services: targeting those most in need

9% of food from the Food Hub supports a wide range of specialist organisations working with some of the most vulnerable adults and children in the community. In total, the Hub supports 29 groups supporting people experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges, disability, migration and resettlement, early help, care leavers, veterans, domestic abuse, addiction and families in crisis.

These groups use the food in a variety of ways, from producing meals, creating food parcels to cooking. Some organisations also take food out to support individuals across the county.

3.9 Crisis parcels

The Food Hub is also contacted by case workers and individuals with requests for food for people in crisis, particularly when other organisations are closed. In 2025/6 the team shared 100 emergency parcels. Teams requesting parcels include Health workers, Council teams, the Police and organisations supporting people in temporary accommodation, domestic abuse and addiction. The Hub is a crucial resource for these frontline teams, as this feedback from Shropshire Domestic Abuse Service outlines:

"The Food Hub have been an amazing partner of ours. Not only for the women and children in refuge but also within the community. Providing crisis parcels when needed. The hub also supports our family events at Christmas and Easter and also supports our survivors' meetings. I can't put into words how much the support means, they are an amazing resource, helping us to stretch budgets, even down to donated toys that keep our children entertained at much needed times and at critical points. They are always there for us."

4.0 Ten-Year impact at a glance

Over the past decade, Shrewsbury Food Hub has transformed surplus food into significant environmental and social good for Shropshire. What began as a small local initiative has grown into a high-impact, cost-effective model delivering measurable benefits at scale.

4.1 Key achievements (2016 - 2026)



4.2 Reach and intensity of impact

- **100+** community groups supported in Shropshire
- Around **4,000** people reached per week
- **66%** of food available via open-access Foodshares

4.3 Financial impact on communities

- **£6 million+** value of food shared, stretching household budgets
- **83%** of groups reduced operating costs
- Over **50%** of groups rely on the Hub for more than **60%** of their food budget

4.4 Nutritional impact

- **46%** fresh fruit and vegetables
- Food shared reflects Government recommended EatWell Guide recommendations
- Improves nutritional quality of diets, particularly for those on lower incomes

4.5 An efficient model that delivers real impact

The Hub's model combines low-cost logistics with high community reach, ensuring that surplus food is redistributed quickly, safely and provides high benefit to the community. In 2025/6:

-
- **230+** volunteers donated **21,000+** volunteer hours
- **£1,203** cost per tonne of food redistributed
- **£5.21** return per £1 invested

4.6 Return on Investment and Impact Methodology

Table 1: Estimated value generated by Shrewsbury Food Hub in 2025/26

Assumptions	
The estimated value of volunteer hours @ minimum wage £12.21	£256,477
The estimated value of CO2 saved @ £306/tonne	£219,708
The estimated value of food saved following WRAP methodology	£1,228,643
Estimated total value	£1,704,828
Total expenditure of redistribution operation	£327,359
Return per £1	£5.21
Cost per tonne	£1,203
Cost per meal (420g)	50.5p

Table 1 sets out the estimated social, environmental and economic value generated by Shrewsbury Food Hub's redistribution activity in 2025/26. It brings together key indicators including the value of volunteer time, carbon savings and the economic value of redistributed food, alongside operational expenditure to calculate return on investment, cost per tonne and cost per meal.

While many surplus food redistribution organisations produce impact reports, there is currently no single, standardised methodology used across the sector. This makes comparison between organisations challenging and can lead to variation in reported outcomes depending on assumptions, valuation methods and scope. In the absence of a consistent national framework, this report applies recognised industry standards wherever possible, drawing primarily on WRAP guidance and UK Government valuation tools to ensure transparency, comparability and credibility of estimates.

A consistent and conservative approach has been taken throughout. The value of volunteer time is calculated using the UK minimum wage of £12.21 per hour. Meals saved are

calculated using WRAP's established conversion rate of 420g per meal equivalent, ensuring alignment with national reporting standards for redistributed food. The value of redistributed food is also based on WRAP methodology, which estimates £3,099 per tonne (2014 baseline), adjusted for inflation to reflect current values. Carbon savings are valued using the 2025 UK Government Green Book central estimate of £306 per tonne of CO₂e.

Together, these methods produce an overall estimated impact value of £1,704,828 against an operational expenditure of £327,359, resulting in a return of £5.21 for every £1 invested. The cost of £1,203/tonne and 50.5p / meal further demonstrate the efficiency of the model.

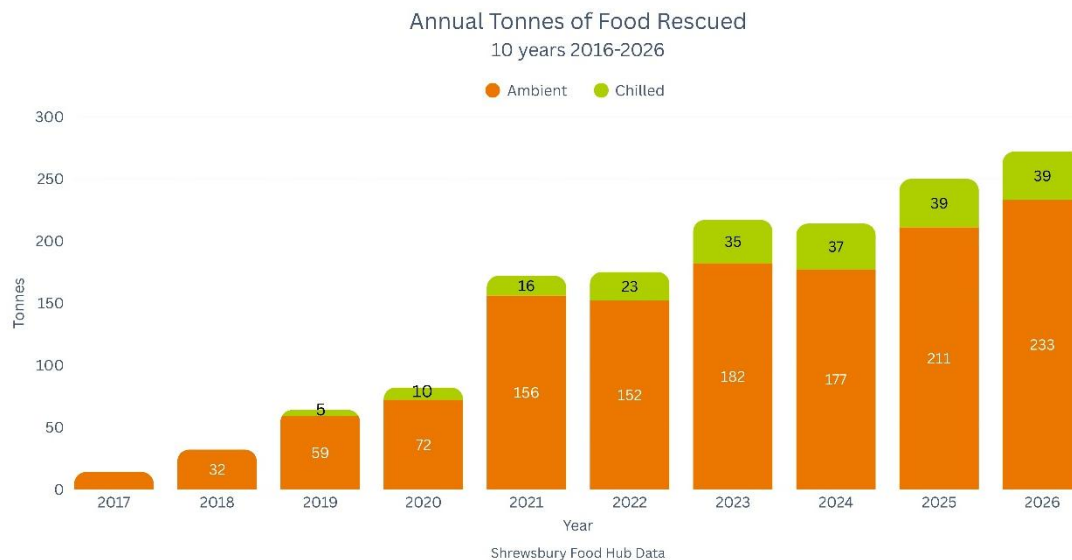
It is important to emphasise that these figures are conservative estimates. They focus on direct, quantifiable benefits and do not fully capture the wider social value generated by the organisation. Benefits such as improved mental wellbeing, reduced social isolation, increased community cohesion, skills development, and strengthened local resilience are well evidenced elsewhere in this report but are not fully monetised within the calculation.

The figures presented therefore represent a minimum estimate of value created. The true impact of Shrewsbury Food Hub is likely to be significantly higher when these broader social outcomes are taken into account. See Appendix B for further information on the assumptions, methodologies and limitations underpinning these calculations.

5.0 Environmental Impact

Over the past ten years Shrewsbury Food Hub has played an important role in **rescuing nearly 1,500 tonnes of surplus food**. Over time, the organisation has significantly increased the volume of food it prevents from going to waste, from 14 tonnes in 2016/17 to 272 tonnes in 2025/26, more than a nineteen-fold increase in annual food saved.

Figure 4: Tonnes of food saved from going to waste



Over a decade Shrewsbury Food Hub has mitigated over **4,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent emissions (CO₂e)**, equivalent to growing 200,000 trees over 10 years. Preventing food from going to waste is particularly important because our food system is highly resource-intensive: across farming, manufacturing, transport and storage.

Shrewsbury Food Hub has saved over **200 tonnes of chilled and frozen food** in the seven years it has been collecting these products. Saving chilled foods creates more environmental impact, as they are much more energy intensive to produce. Preventing one tonne of chilled foods like meat and dairy from going to waste saves 14 tonnes CO₂e, in comparison to a tonne of bread, which saves 1.5-2.5 tonnes CO₂e.

The food saved over 10 years is equivalent to over **3.5 million meals**.

5.1 How the Hub model prevents food from going to waste

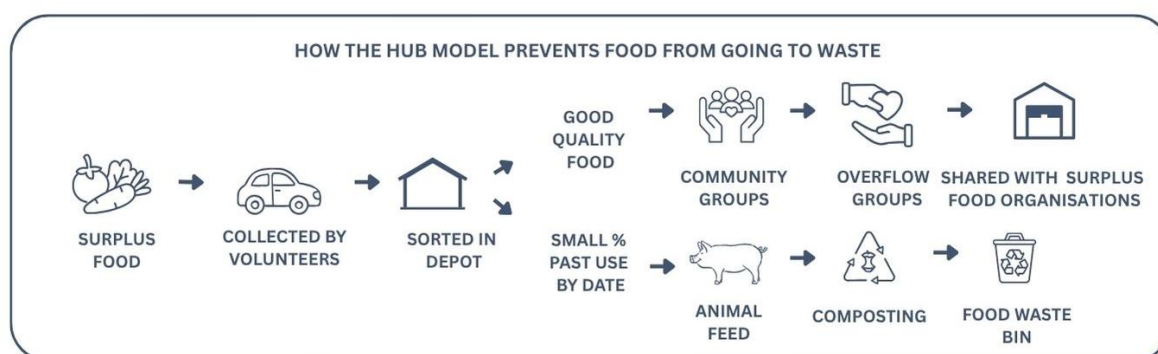


Figure 5: Hub Model

Shrewsbury Food Hub has developed a ‘hub’ model which closely matches the unpredictable nature of surplus food coming in, with groups who are able to put the food to good use. The model is reactive and adaptable, and **designed to prevent good food from going to waste**. Key to this is the time spent by volunteers sorting the food when it comes into the depot.

First, food is sorted to match the needs of community groups. Social groups like cakes and pastries, groups like the Ark cook large meals for their clients, schools prefer bread and fruit for snack time. When there are large volumes of food, it is shared with a range of ‘overflow’ groups.

Depending on the day and the type of food, this may involve sending out food to informal Foodshares outside volunteers’ homes or sending smoothies for runners to enjoy at Parkrun. When there is a very large volume of one item, this is often shared with other surplus food organisations in Shropshire.

A small percentage of food coming into the depot is past its **use by** date. This isn’t safe to be shared, but Shrewsbury Food Hub’s model gets as much as possible into good use. Volunteers sort this food: first into what is suitable for animal consumption, then what can be composted, and finally a small amount goes into a food waste bin.

A local farmer collects regularly from the Hub to feed her pigs, horses, calves and chickens. This food brings down her animal feed bill, which has doubled since 2020, and creates enrichment through the variety it adds to her animal’s diet. In return, she donates pork to the Hub.

"They help us out; we help them out. I don't think they know how much they help me out by donating the food waste" Charlotte Stokes

5.2 Promoting food waste reduction



Figure 6: Surplus food for education

A key part of Shrewsbury Food Hub’s mission is to promote food waste reduction.

The main impact of the practical action of sharing surplus food with the local community is that thousands of people have eaten food which would previously have gone to waste. Shrewsbury Food Hub has demonstrated that this food is nutritious and delicious and shouldn’t be wasted. This challenges perceptions about the meaning of **best before** dates and encourages everyone to think about how they can prevent food waste within their own homes.

Food waste campaigns and social media posts offer ideas on how to use up commonly wasted food items, from making banana bread from brown bananas to bread and butter pudding from slightly stale bread and pastries. Shrewsbury Food Hub’s messaging is always nonjudgemental, encouraging practical behaviour change.

The **Taste with No Waste challenge** is a key example of this approach. With more than **1,000 participants**, an evaluation in 2023 by **Harper Adams University**¹ found that participating families reduced their food waste by an average of **44%**, saving around **£200 per year** and reducing associated CO₂ emissions. At present, the challenge is not actively promoted due to limited funding.

Supporting over 100 community groups and schools to make good use of surplus food also spreads awareness of the problem of food waste and encourages waste reduction within these organisations. **79%** of community groups agreed that Shrewsbury Food Hub enabled them to reduce food waste in their organisation.

The team also delivers ‘**Circus Surplus**’ workshops in primary and secondary schools across Shropshire, highlighting the problem of food waste and what children can do to reduce it. Shrewsbury Food Hub also runs stalls at large events like Shrewsbury Food Festival to further engage the community.

¹ See appendix E

Since 2022, **Community Kitchen** has played a key role in Shrewsbury Food Hub's food waste education programme. The kitchen brings a diverse range of people into the kitchen to prepare food and learn new skills: all while using surplus ingredients.

There are three main activities which have been successfully piloted and are identified as opportunities for future development and income generation:

- 1) Soupersonic: processing 'veg on the edge' into delicious and nutritious meals
- 2) community cooking sessions with groups across Shropshire
- 3) catering for community events.

These sessions have reached **674 participants**, and prepared **10,000 portions of food**, all made from surplus in the last year (2025/26).



6.0 Social Impact

Access to nutritious food is fundamental to health, wellbeing and equality. In Shropshire, rising living costs mean that many individuals and families face increasing pressure on their food budgets. By redistributing surplus food at scale, Shrewsbury Food Hub not only reduces waste, but improves access to good-quality food, strengthens community connections, and helps to reduce health inequalities across the county.

6.1 Key Social Impact at a Glance

Reach and scale: Shrewsbury Food Hub supports a wide network of community organisations and open-access Foodshares, reaching people across Shropshire every day.

- **100+** community groups and Foodshares supported
- Approximately **4,000** people reached each week
- **3,566,368** meals provided over ten years

Financial support in a cost-of-living context: The redistribution of surplus food provides significant financial value to both households and community organisations, helping to stretch limited budgets and sustain essential services.

- **£6 million+** in food value redistributed
- Reduces pressure on household food budgets
- Enables community groups to expand services without increasing costs

Improving access to nutritious food: The food provided is not only substantial in volume but also contributes to healthier diets, particularly for those who may otherwise struggle to afford fresh produce.

- **46%** of food distributed is fresh fruit and vegetables
- Additional provision of protein-rich chilled and frozen foods supports balanced diets
- Supports improved nutrition for families, older people, and those with limited access to healthy food

Reaching those most in need: Alongside universal provision, the Hub works closely with organisations supporting people experiencing complex challenges, ensuring food reaches those who benefit most.

- Strong engagement with groups supporting people experiencing homelessness, low income, domestic abuse, and health challenges
- **9%** of food distributed through specialist support services
- Enables trusted organisations to provide discreet, non-stigmatising support

Place, access and reducing inequalities: Shrewsbury Food Hub operates across the county, ensuring food reaches both urban and rural communities, including areas of higher deprivation.

- Most Foodshares are located within reach of communities facing higher levels of deprivation (such as Harlescott, Monkmoor, Meole, Ditherington and Sundorne all in Shrewsbury).
- County-wide reach through community partners
- Contributes to reducing inequalities in access to nutritious food

Community, wellbeing and connection: Beyond meeting immediate need, food acts as a catalyst for wider social impact, bringing people together, strengthening relationships and supporting wellbeing.

- Creates welcoming, inclusive spaces through open-access Foodshares
- Supports social interaction, reducing isolation and building community cohesion
- Community Kitchen activity deepens impact through skills development, confidence building and shared experiences around food

Together, these impacts show that surplus food is far more than a resource. It is a catalyst for improving health, reducing financial pressure, and strengthening communities across Shropshire.

6.2 Impacts for participants

At its most immediate level, the Food Hub improves access to nutritious food within communities. Individuals and families are able to take food home from Foodshares, helping to ease financial pressure. For many, this provides a vital safety net.

- **88% of groups reported reduced financial stress and anxiety for participants**

Surplus food, including fresh, chilled and frozen items, improves both the quality and reliability of food available. Many organisations also use it to provide discreet, non-stigmatising support to families.

"It helps provide essentials that are sometimes not always affordable."
Teens with Tots

"It enables us to provide silent support to families at least once a week."
St Giles Youth Club

Beyond meeting immediate needs, food acts as a powerful social catalyst. Sharing a meal or a cup of tea creates opportunities for conversation, friendship and mutual support. Groups

describe how food from the Hub *“brings the community together to have food and chatter,”* helping to build trust and a sense of belonging.

People often attend Foodshares not just for food, but for conversation, arriving early to socialise and building friendships in the queue.

“The Foodshare helps build a community spirit and brings positivity.”

Coton Manor Foodshare

For some, particularly older people or those experiencing isolation, these sessions can be life-changing, offering both social contact and emotional support.

Surplus food also creates opportunities for learning and personal development. Food from the Hub is widely used by schools to provide young people with hands-on experience in cookery and science lessons. Participants learn about food safety and practical life skills such as cooking, food preparation and nutrition, often experimenting with ingredients in a ‘ready, steady, cook’ style. These opportunities also encourage children to try new foods and develop confidence in the kitchen.

“It enables us to offer more variety and new foods to children.” Coleham Nursery

“It allows all students to cook and learn valuable life skills.” Belvedere School

These experiences also encourage greater awareness of food waste and sustainability, helping people to make more informed choices. One group supporting older people said that the food:

“Enables me to reach more people with good quality food and it has opened people’s minds to the issue of food waste”. Stretton Mayfair Trust

Alongside this, food plays an important role in supporting wellbeing and dignity. Cooking and eating together can reduce anxiety, build confidence and encourage social interaction. A group supporting people in temporary accommodation reported how cooking sessions *“encouraged an autistic resident to come out of his shell and socialise with others.”*
Temporary Accommodation

The impact often extends beyond those directly involved, as food is often taken home to be shared with friends, neighbours and family. With people being encouraged to *“take a loaf of bread, and one for their neighbour”*, the message about food waste is amplified, and community resilience is strengthened.

Together, these impacts show that surplus food is far more than a resource. It is a catalyst for connection, confidence and wellbeing, enabling individuals to meet immediate needs while

also strengthening long-term resilience, improving health outcomes, and contributing to more equitable and connected communities. In this way, the Food Hub's work delivers both immediate relief and lasting social value.

6.3 The impact on community groups

Access to surplus food makes a substantial, and often critical, difference to community groups across Shropshire. By significantly reducing or removing food costs, groups are able to redirect resources into other areas of support and expand what they offer.

- **83% of groups said the Hub helps reduce their operating costs**
- For over half of groups, food from the Hub makes up **more than 60% of their food budget**
- Food from the Hub forms **100% of food budget for Foodshares**: *"Without it, we would not exist"*

Many organisations, including those supporting people experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges or addiction, have no dedicated food budget, so surplus food from the Hub forms an essential part of their offer.

For example, the Hub has a long-standing partnership with the Ark, a drop-in centre for homeless and vulnerable people. The Hub provides over 80% of the Ark's food requirements – enough to make 11,000 hot meals a year (source: Anton Goodwin, CEO The Ark). Others, such as schools, use the food from the Hub to enhance provision, providing snacks, activities and cookery sessions which would not be possible from their core budget.

This financial impact directly translates into greater reach and delivery:

- **93% of groups said the Hub enables them to support more people**
- **86% said it enables them to deliver more services**

In a challenging funding environment, access to surplus food helps organisations sustain and grow their work, extending their reach without increasing core costs.

Beyond this, food plays a vital role in building **engagement and trust**. Providing meals or refreshments creates a welcoming, nonjudgemental environment, helping organisations connect with individuals who may otherwise be hard to reach. Food can act as both a draw and a bridge, encouraging attendance while creating space for conversation and support.

Groups consistently highlight the difference this makes:

"Without the food our group would not be so well attended or enjoyed."
St Giles Youth Club

“It acts as a means of attracting more people.” St Peters

For some groups, the impact goes deeper, helping to build relationships and break down barriers. This can be particularly important for those who may be reluctant to engage with services. One group supporting veterans highlighted how:

“Food has broken down barriers with families.” Armed Forces Outreach

Together, these impacts show that surplus food is not just a resource, but is a catalyst, enabling organisations to reach further, connect more deeply, and deliver meaningful support within their communities, while strengthening the resilience and sustainability of local support systems.

Case Study: Redwoods Centre

Each week volunteers deliver food to the Redwoods centre, an NHS inpatient mental health hospital, for “Food Hub Thursdays”. Staff cut up fruits and vegetables and prepare appealing platters of food, which are offered to 40-75 patients on mental health wards. Advertised as “more than just a carrot stick”, staff have found the benefits go far beyond simply providing a snack. The food helps with patient engagement, and patients have given positive feedback, with some trying foods they have never experienced before. **The team have nominated the Food Hub for an NHS excellence award.**



6.4 The impact on suppliers

In 2025/26, Shrewsbury Food Hub worked with **74 food suppliers**, the majority based in Shrewsbury, alongside partners across the county including Muller in Market Drayton and

Maynards in Wem. Over the past decade, these partnerships have become a core part of the Hub's model, creating an efficient, locally embedded system for redistributing surplus food.

These relationships deliver clear **mutual benefit**, combining environmental impact, cost efficiency and social value. By providing a reliable, trusted route for surplus food, the Hub enables businesses to reduce waste, lower disposal costs, and minimise their environmental footprint. At the same time, it offers a practical mechanism for contributing to the local community in a way that is visible, immediate and meaningful.

"Surplus is inevitable in retail we often find ourselves with food that has plenty of life left but cannot be sold. The Food Hub has been an amazing resource, redistributing it to others in the community."

Minimise at Shrewsbury Market Hall

Beyond these direct benefits, the partnerships strengthen connections between businesses and the communities they serve, embedding surplus redistribution within the local economy and fostering a shared sense of responsibility for reducing waste and supporting those in need.

"It's great to know we are giving something back that the food is being used in the local community. The team who collect are great." Maynards

For many suppliers, this collaboration also has internal benefits, increasing staff engagement and morale by linking day-to-day operations with a wider social and environmental purpose.

"It means a lot to us. I love making sure you get everything that is available." Tesco

Alongside formal supplier partnerships, Shrewsbury Food Hub extends this model through its gleaning activity, working with residents, growers and farmers across the county. In 2025/26, volunteers harvested surplus produce from **42** locations, collecting nearly **6 tonnes** of fruit and vegetables that would otherwise have gone to waste, with an estimated value of over **£21,000**.

This approach further demonstrates the Hub's role in coordinating local resources, ensuring that surplus food whether from retailers, producers or households is captured and redistributed effectively. For growers and landowners, it provides a simple way to ensure produce is used rather than wasted; for communities, it increases access to fresh, locally sourced food.

Together, these partnerships form a **trusted and coordinated network**, enabling surplus food to be redistributed at scale while strengthening relationships across the local food system. In doing so, the Hub not only diverts food from waste, but also supports a more connected, resource-efficient and resilient local food economy.

7.0 Community Kitchen

In 2023, Shrewsbury Food Hub established the Community Kitchen in partnership with a local professional chef based in the unit next to the depot. Since early 2026, the project has operated from a commercial-standard kitchen. This has enabled the Hub to expand into three new food activities, saving more food from going to waste, and supporting the local community:

- 1) Soupersonic - processing 'veg on the edge' into delicious and nutritious meals.
- 2) Community cooking sessions with groups across Shropshire.
- 3) Catering for community events.

Since 2023 the Community Kitchen has:

- run 332 sessions
- worked with 23 community groups
- engaged with 674 people
- prepared over 25,000 meals



Community Kitchen brings people together in small, sociable sessions to process 'veg on the edge' into meals. Volunteers triage food arriving in the Hub each day and chop and freeze fruit and vegetables so they can be used on cooking days. Sessions are lively and creative, shaped by the unpredictable nature of surplus ingredients.

As one volunteer shared, "It's always a surprise what we will be doing. We cook combinations I wouldn't have thought of." Soups and other meals are then distributed to the community via a network of community freezers.

In these relaxed two-hour sessions, volunteers cook side by side, share conversation, and eat together. While practical in nature, the impact goes far beyond food preparation, creating a space for connection, creativity and shared purpose. Volunteers describe a warm, welcoming environment where it is easy to build relationships and feel part of a team.

For many, particularly those new to the area, experiencing bereavement, hardship or change, it provides an important route into community life. As one volunteer reflected: *“I’m glad I found this charity. It has really helped me. I feel involved and as if I am amongst friends.”*

The diversity of people involved adds to this sense of inclusion, bringing together different ages, backgrounds and experiences. The kitchen is also designed to be accessible, with adaptable height tables enabling people of all abilities to participate.

Volunteers are motivated by a clear sense of purpose. Preparing food that will be shared locally offers immediate, visible impact, while reinforcing the Food Hub’s environmental mission. *“We love the fact that we are saving food and getting it put to good use.”* Many report becoming more aware of food waste and changing their own habits as a result.

Feedback from groups like the Meet Place Community Centre, which support older people and reduce social isolation highlights how food produced by Community Kitchen volunteers benefits the community:

“Our Wednesday group love the soups very much and if there are any leftovers they take it home with them especially the senior citizens in the group...We are happy for it to be delivered on the Wednesdays as usual with our frozen deliveries and always appreciate the bread with it.”

7.1 Community cooking sessions

The Community Kitchen works with a diverse range of groups across Shropshire, supporting people who may have limited cooking skills, confidence or access to healthy food. These include Men’s Sheds, young people leaving care, families in temporary accommodation, and people experiencing homelessness or domestic abuse.

At its core, the programme is designed to support **sustained behaviour change around food**, building practical skills, increasing confidence, and improving understanding of nutrition, while creating opportunities for social connection and wellbeing.

Programmes are delivered over a series of sessions and co-designed with partner organisations to reflect the needs and experiences of participants. Sessions typically take place in small groups, either in the Community Kitchen or in familiar community settings, creating a safe and accessible environment where people feel comfortable taking part.

Alongside this, our partner organisations are supported with food safety and delivery skills as well as ‘savvy’ recipes that allow cooking on a budget. This helps activities to continue beyond the involvement of the Community Kitchen.



At the heart of the model is a **relational and practical approach to behaviour change**. Sessions are informal, inclusive and hands-on, recognising that lack of confidence, limited experience, or embarrassment can be significant barriers to engaging with food. By creating a supportive, nonjudgemental environment, the Community Kitchen builds trust first, with skills, knowledge and confidence developing over time.

Participants gain **practical, transferable skills** in food preparation, cooking and meal planning, often working with unfamiliar or surplus ingredients.

This encourages adaptability, creativity and confidence in the kitchen. At the same time, sessions increase **awareness of nutrition and healthy eating**, helping participants to make more informed choices and build healthier habits within constrained budgets.

The use of surplus food is central to this approach. By demonstrating how to prepare nutritious meals from ingredients that might otherwise be discarded, sessions challenge perceptions of food waste and promote more sustainable behaviours. Participants frequently report changes in how they shop, cook and use food at home, reducing waste and making better use of available ingredients.

Across different settings, this model has led to significant and often lasting change.

- **Shrewsbury Men’s Shed:** Participants with a wide range of experience, including those learning to cook for the first time after bereavement, developed confidence in the kitchen. One participant in his late 80s now leads a weekly cooking session for others, creating a new sense of purpose and connection.

- **Coleham Primary School:** Children worked together to plan, prepare and serve a meal for their families. Alongside developing practical life skills, this strengthened relationships with families and encouraged children to try new foods, contributing to healthier eating habits and a culture of sharing.
- **Shrewsbury Ark:** Regular sessions brought staff, volunteers and people experiencing homelessness together to prepare meals, creating space for conversation and connection. One participant shared that it was the first Christmas meal they had eaten in 12 years. The partnership has since led to volunteers running their own cooking sessions, embedding skills and extending impact within the organisation.
- **Shropshire Domestic Abuse:** Created safe, informal sessions for women and their children to cook and eat together. These sessions supported wellbeing and confidence. *“Are you two therapists?” A lady asked, “because we feel so much better after these sessions.”* Throughout the summer, Shrewsbury Food Hub was able to provide fresh fruit and cakes for organized picnics across the county to support these families. The budget which would have been spent on food, was then used to pay for children’s entertainers, to create a summer of fun for the families.
- **Care leavers and young people:** Located in supported accommodation, cooking sessions have supported independence, confidence and cultural exchange. With some sessions involving unaccompanied asylum seekers from Sudan, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Iran, there was the opportunity to cook and share food from several cultures. In some cases, this has been the first opportunity for participants to come together as a group, highlighting the role of food in building connection as well as skills.

Across all this work, the impact extends beyond individual sessions. Preparing and sharing food helps to reduce isolation, build confidence, and create a sense of belonging. For many participants, these sessions act as a stepping stone to wider engagement, including volunteering, education or employment. Some participants have gone on to become regular volunteers at the Food Hub, demonstrating how engagement can deepen over time.

The influence of the Community Kitchen also extends beyond direct delivery. Through social media, events and partnerships, the Hub shares practical knowledge and ideas for cooking with surplus food, reaching a wider audience and supporting behaviour change at a community level.

“Everyone deserves access to good food and the skills and confidence to prepare it.”

Together, this work shows that the Community Kitchen is not just about learning to cook. It is about **enabling lasting change in how people understand, prepare and value food**, turning surplus into skills, improving confidence and nutrition, and supporting more sustainable, connected and resilient communities.

7.2 Catering

The Community Kitchen has also created new opportunities to use surplus food to influence perceptions, generate income, and extend the Hub's impact beyond its core programmes.

Over the past year, the team has catered more than **20 events** across the county, including a six-course meal for over 80 guests at a Community Foundation event and the High Sheriff's Afternoon Tea for 250 people.

These events play an important role in **changing perceptions of surplus food**. By showcasing high-quality, creative dishes made from surplus ingredients, they challenge assumptions about food safety, quality and value.

Audiences experience first-hand that surplus food is not only safe to eat, but can be nutritious, varied and delicious. This helps to shift attitudes and encourages more positive behaviours around food use and waste.

Catering also enables the Hub to engage with **different audiences**, including local leaders, funders and community stakeholders, helping to raise awareness of both the scale of food waste and the potential of redistribution as a solution. In this way, events act as a platform to amplify the Hub's message and build wider support for its work.

Alongside this, catering provides an **income stream**, which is reinvested into the organisation's core activities. This income supports the continued redistribution of surplus food to communities across Shropshire.

Together, this work demonstrates how surplus food can be used not only to meet immediate need, but also to **influence attitudes, generate resources, and support long-term impact**—turning surplus into an opportunity for advocacy, engagement and sustainability.

7.3 Summary

Together, the Community Kitchen represents a step change in how Shrewsbury Food Hub works with people and communities. It enables deeper, more sustained engagement with groups the Hub has supported for many years, shifting from providing food alone to actively building skills, confidence and long-term behaviour change around cooking, nutrition and food use. Importantly, this work also contributes to longer-term preventative health outcomes by supporting healthier eating habits and greater food independence.

The Community Kitchen is not a standalone service, but an extension and deepening of the Hub's existing relationships, creating a reliable cycle of contact and regular rapport, where people move from receiving support, to participating, to contributing as volunteers themselves.

In doing so, it helps build more resilient individuals and communities, where food becomes not just a basic need, but a catalyst for wellbeing, inclusion and lasting change.

8.0 Reaching Communities, Reducing Inequalities

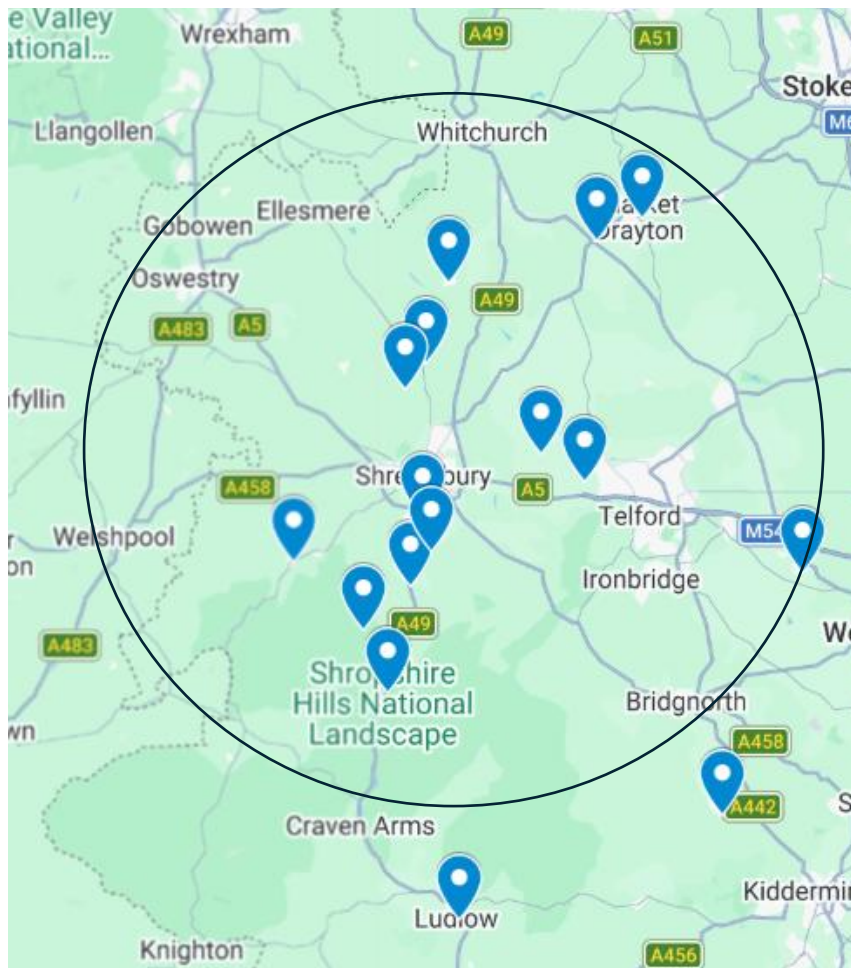
Shrewsbury Food Hub works across Shropshire to improve access to nutritious food and address inequalities in both food security and health outcomes. Through their network of Foodshares and community groups, surplus food is redistributed into everyday community settings and specialist support services, reaching people where they live, learn and/or socialise. By embedding provision within communities rather than centralising it, the Food Hub helps to reduce barriers to access and strengthens equitable health outcomes.

Nationally, over 6 million adults and 2.1 million children experienced food insecurity in early 2026, with half of these households cutting back on buying fresh fruit [Source: Food Foundation]. Locally, one in five children in Shropshire are eligible for free school meals, and the cost of a healthy diet remains out of reach for many households. Surplus food is a helpful resource, but it does not address the underlying reasons why people experience food insecurity. Shrewsbury Food Hub supported the establishment of the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance in 2018 to work on coordinating actions on these deeper-rooted issues.

8.1 A county-wide reach of food and activities

Although based in Shrewsbury, the Food Hub operates across the county. A network of satellite and pop-up Foodshares extends provision into surrounding towns and villages, improving access for rural communities who may otherwise face distance, transport and cost barriers. The Community Kitchen delivers sessions across Shropshire, including Ludlow, Highley, Market Drayton and Whitchurch, working with groups including care leavers, refugees and young people. In addition, partner organisations such as domestic abuse services and Early help teams distribute food from the Hub directly to families across the county.

Figure 7: Map of Foodshare reach (20 mile radius)

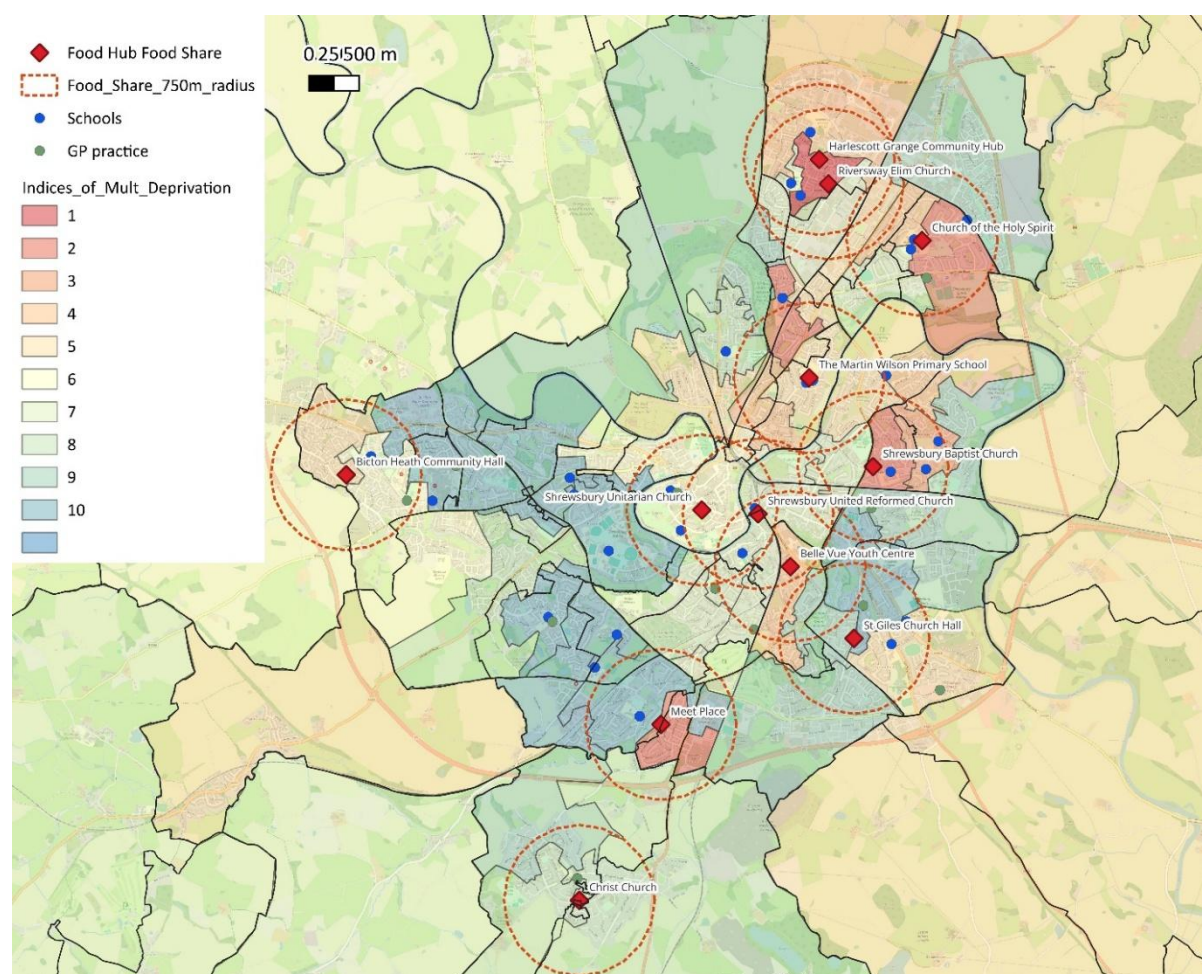


Within Shrewsbury, Foodshares are located across neighbourhoods and are either within or in easy walking distance of wards experiencing higher levels of deprivation, creating accessible provision for those most affected by food insecurity.

This localised approach is significant in the context of marked health inequalities. In Shrewsbury, life expectancy can differ by up to six years between the most and least affluent areas [Source: Fingertips data]. Ensuring access to affordable, nutritious food within communities contributes to narrowing these inequalities over time.

Together, this neighbourhood-nourishing model ensures that surplus food reaches those who need it most, not only addressing immediate need, but doing so in ways that build trust, dignity and connection.

Figure 8: Map showing Foodshares location in relation to areas of deprivation



8.2 Reaching those most in need

The Food Hub supports individuals and families through both open-access provision and targeted partnerships with community organisations. This ensures that support is flexible, inclusive and able to reach people experiencing a wide range of circumstances, including homelessness, domestic abuse, mental ill health, social isolation, migration and financial hardship.

Many of the Hub's Foodshares are deliberately situated in wards with high indices of multiple deprivation, both at local and national rankings:

Table 2: Electoral Ward Rankings

Electoral Ward	National & Local Rank (1 = Most Deprived)	
	Shropshire Rank/193	National Rank/32,844
Harlescott	1	1,622
Monkmoor	3	3,345
Meole	5	4,614
Ditherington	6	5,470
Sundorne	8	5,803

A significant proportion of food (66%) is distributed through open-access Foodshares, enabling anyone in the community to access food without referral, eligibility checks or stigma. Many people attending take extra food for friends or neighbours, extending the reach further. This universal model not only supports those in need but also allows people to engage on their own terms, including those who may not be connected to formal services.

Alongside this, partner organisations embed food within their wider support offer. Schools and youth services provide breakfast, snacks and meals that ensure consistent access to food in familiar environments. Community groups and social spaces support older adults and isolated individuals through shared meals to reduce isolation and strengthen connection. Specialist services provide food parcels, outreach support and cooked meals to people in crisis. This approach enables support to be delivered in ways that feel safe, trusted and appropriate to each group. It also allows organisations to provide discreet support to families, extending the reach beyond individuals to whole households.

Across long-standing partnerships developed over more than a decade, the Food Hub is increasingly able to move beyond food provision into deeper, more sustained engagement focused on skills, confidence and independence. As outlined in the Community Kitchen section, this includes supporting people in temporary accommodation, schools and youth settings to develop practical cooking skills and food knowledge, rather than simply receiving food. In some cases, this has created a cycle of engagement, where individuals who first accessed support go on to volunteer with the Food Hub, contributing back into the same system that supported them and strengthening long-term community resilience.

8.3 Nutrition, health and wellbeing

The nutritional quality of food distributed by the Food Hub plays an important role in supporting public health. By weight, 46% of all food shared in 2025/26 was fresh fruit and vegetables, with a further 28% consisting of bakery items such as bread. The remainder includes a balance of calorie-dense foods such as dairy, meat, fish, eggs and ready meals.

This provision supports access to a more balanced diet, particularly for households on lower incomes, and broadly aligns with the Eatwell Guide. It is especially significant in Shropshire,

where only 37% of adults meet recommended fruit and vegetable intake, and where levels of adult and childhood obesity remain high [Source: Fingertips data].

Beyond nutrition, access to food through community settings contributes to wider wellbeing. Shared food provision helps reduce social isolation, create routine and structure, and foster informal connection and support networks. These social benefits are increasingly recognised as important contributors to mental health and longer-term preventative health outcomes.

8.4 A system for longer-term change

Taken together, this model ensures that surplus food is not only redistributed efficiently but also used strategically to address inequality and strengthen community resilience. By combining open-access provision with targeted, relationship-based support, Shrewsbury Food Hub reaches people across the county while adapting to different levels of need. This approach supports improved nutrition, stronger social connection and more equitable health outcomes. This is especially important for those suffering from loneliness.

Ultimately, the Food Hub is not only responding to need, but helping to reshape how communities' access, understand and use food, turning surplus into a catalyst for inclusion, wellbeing and long-term change.

9.0 System level impact

Since its founding in 2016, Shrewsbury Food Hub has played a pioneering role in surplus food redistribution across Shropshire. While its core mission is to **redistribute surplus food and to promote food waste reduction for environmental and social good**, its impact extends far beyond logistics. The Food Hub is respected and widely recognised as a trusted, established and expert organisation. Its strength lies in its dual role: deep neighbourhood-level engagement through Foodshares and community partners, alongside broader county-wide system influence through partnerships, convening activity and knowledge sharing.

Figure 9: Community Resilience



9.1 A hub for knowledge, capacity and system development

Shrewsbury Food Hub is a community-rooted organisation, grounded in an assets-based approach that builds on existing strengths, relationships and local networks. A guiding principle has been that surplus food should be redistributed fairly, locally, quickly and safely. In practice, this has positioned the Hub as a source of **practical expertise and innovation in surplus food systems**, sharing knowledge with organisations across Shropshire and beyond.

Shrewsbury Food Hub has county-wide influence, supporting organisations across Shropshire (including OsNosh, Hands Together Ludlow and the NotJust Surplus project) by providing advice on food safety, logistics and redistribution models. Within Shrewsbury, it helped establish a network of Foodshares by training volunteers, supporting safe food handling during the pandemic, and securing funding for 13 fridges and freezers placed in community settings to enable safe chilled and frozen food redistribution.

This role has extended into **county-wide system development**, including the establishment of the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance (2018) and the Shropshire Good Food Partnership (2020). Both organisations have since evolved into independent entities, strengthening long-term food resilience and deepening understanding of food insecurity. Their development was enabled by the convening and catalytic role played by Shrewsbury Food Hub.

9.2 Connecting organisations and building resilience

The Food Hub convenes a trusted network of more than 100 community organisations, underpinned by strong relationships, active WhatsApp channels and regular gatherings such as Annual General Feasts. This creates a connected ecosystem in which organisations can collaborate, share learning and respond collectively to local need.

This convening role became particularly critical during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Hub rapidly coordinated partners, shared information across the sector, and helped broker large-scale food deliveries from DEFRA to support foodbanks across the county. More broadly, it continues to act as a connector, identifying solutions in a timely way, strengthening collaboration and reinforcing local resilience.

9.3 Social and public health impact within the system

Through working with the network of kindness it has developed, the Hub broadens access to nutritious food, provides support with cost-of-living pressures, and strengthens community resilience. This work aligns closely with local authority priorities around prevention and early intervention. In this sense, the Food Hub functions as a strategic partner, complementing statutory services by bridging gaps in provision and ensuring support reaches people in practical, accessible ways.

9.4 Values-led system change

Underpinning this work are the Hub's core values of passion, accountability, inclusiveness, integrity, care and resilience. These values shape a distinctive approach that prioritises collaboration, camaraderie, dignity and community-led solutions.

As Co-Founder Ali Thomas reflects, "It's a huge privilege to do things with fantastic people who do great things in our town."

Through this values-driven model, Shrewsbury Food Hub demonstrates how surplus food redistribution can do more than meet immediate need, it can actively shape a more connected, resilient and equitable local system of care and support.

10.0 Volunteer Impact

This section draws on extensive volunteer feedback, including responses from 121 survey participants alongside qualitative interviews. Together, this provides a robust evidence base for understanding the scale, experience and impact of volunteering at Shrewsbury Food Hub.

10.1 Volunteers: the driving force of impact

For over ten years, Shrewsbury Food Hub has been powered by volunteers, enabling surplus food to be collected, sorted and redistributed seven days a week, all year round. In 2025/26 alone, **231 volunteers** contributed to this work, donating **21,005 hours** of their time. This contribution had an estimated economic value of **£256,477 in 2025/26**, demonstrating the significant role volunteers play in sustaining and scaling the organisation's impact.

The scale of engagement is matched by exceptionally strong experience outcomes. **97% of volunteers feel they are making a difference**, and **97% report a strong sense of belonging**. In addition, **98% feel valued**, and **98% would recommend volunteering** at the Food Hub, indicating consistently high satisfaction and advocacy. Retention is also strong, with **77% of volunteers who started in the past three years still actively involved**.

Volunteering is driven by both social and environmental motivations. **92% volunteer because they want to do something good in their community**, while **89% report that they are helping to protect the environment**. Alongside this, **82% report improved wellbeing** as a result of their involvement, highlighting the personal as well as collective benefits of participation. Taken together, these findings show that volunteering at Shrewsbury Food Hub is both highly sustained and deeply valued.

The following themes illustrate the impact of volunteering at the Hub.

10.2 Strengthening community, belonging and connection

Volunteers consistently describe the Food Hub as a place of connection, friendship and teamwork. Many speak of becoming part of a supportive, welcoming community that spans generations and backgrounds. For those new to the area or experiencing isolation, the Hub offers a vital route into community life. The active WhatsApp groups, social activities such as walking groups and quizzes extend this sense of connection beyond volunteering shifts, strengthening relationships and building lasting friendships. The new 'Heart of Hub' volunteer space at the depot is designed to further enhance these connections.

"The Food Hub has helped me meet new people, make connections and build my community and purpose having just moved to this area."

"Volunteering here is phenomenal!"

The Hub creates the opportunity to work alongside people of different ages, fostering understanding, shared learning and stronger community cohesion. This is particularly important for young volunteers, who report that this is often the first time they have worked alongside people from different generations. As a result, they report improved communication skills and broadened perspectives. One young volunteer shared that the Hub *“Teaches me how to socialise with different ages”*.

10.3 Creating purpose and shared motivation

Volunteers are motivated by a shared purpose, which combines helping others with environmental action. This leads to a strong sense that volunteering at the Hub is meaningful, worthwhile and valued. **98% of volunteers report that they feel valued** in their role at the Hub. **92% volunteer because they are doing something good in their community.**

“I feel like I am giving back to the community. Learning more about the food journey and waste and meeting people in the community.”

89% of volunteers feel they are helping to protect the environment by reducing food waste.

“It has been great to become a part of such a wonderful community, meeting like-minded people, doing so much to prevent waste and building resilience by helping out at a local level.”

Being part of the Hub is particularly significant for people navigating life transitions such as retirement or caring responsibilities.

“It gives purpose and shapes my week and gives me a feeling of worth. I feel I make a difference. I enjoy harvesting, cleaning (+chatting) at the depot and being part of the soupersonic is great fun. I feel valued and part of a real team.”

Some volunteers come to the Hub after having first received food from Foodshares:

“I used to come to the Foodshare and now I am glad to be able to give back. I am a carer and I come to the Hub to get some adult conversation and a sense of connection.”

Volunteers are empowered to take hands-on action, contributing directly to meaningful, real-world outcomes. This hands-on approach reinforces the sense of impact and achievement.

“It feels like a way of being involved in active, practical ways of improving things rather than just talking about them.”

“I enjoy helping practically with the chop and chat sessions, feeling part of the reduction in food waste and provision of food where it is most

needed, all whilst learning a few new prep and cooking skills along the way!”

The dynamic and active nature of the Hub, combined with the practical and unpredictable nature of redistributing surplus food, fosters a sense of being part of something impactful and forward moving. Volunteers are drawn to the energy and dynamism of the Hub. The depot is described as busy, lively and purposeful, with a shared sense of momentum and achievement. Each day is different, with the supply and volume of food varying. There are daily calls to action via WhatsApp, with volunteers stepping in with offers to help whenever needed. Volunteers value the adaptability of roles and the ability to contribute in ways that fit their lives.

“I love the ethos, the flexibility, the people, the adaptability and the creativity that is offered by the Hub.”

“The atmosphere & attitude is always positive & folk work jolly hard– it’s a great feeling to be even a small part of what the machine achieves (and I’ve enjoyed seeing a few more sunrises than I would otherwise!)”

10.4 Improving wellbeing and confidence

Participation supports mental and emotional wellbeing, increasing confidence, personal satisfaction and a sense of achievement within a positive and inclusive culture. Volunteers frequently describe an atmosphere of kindness, humour and mutual support, where hard work is balanced with enjoyment. This positive environment contributes directly to wellbeing, with **82% of volunteers reporting improved wellbeing** as a result of their involvement.

“I really look forward to my volunteering day in the depot. I have also made some great friends. We work well together as a team. Every day is different, and we always manage to have some fun.”

10.5 Developing skills and employability

Volunteering builds transferable skills, experience and confidence, supporting pathways into employment and further opportunities. This is particularly evident for young volunteers. Shrewsbury Food Hub provides a range of volunteering opportunities for young people, including Duke of Edinburgh placements and work experience. These opportunities are designed to support skills development, build confidence and improve employability, while enabling young people to contribute meaningfully to the Hub’s mission.

“I have learnt about food hygiene, safety and preparation as well as engagement and leadership in terms of getting involved in helping out”

Young volunteers take part in a variety of practical activities, from harvesting and sorting food to preparing meals in the Community Kitchen. Through these hands-on roles, they gain direct experience of how surplus food is redistributed and used to support the community. All young people surveyed reported that they felt they had made a difference through their volunteering. As one young volunteer shared:

"It's made me feel like I'm giving back to the community and helping the environment."

Young people highlight learning in areas such as teamwork, communication, organisation and food safety. Alongside practical skills, young people report increases in confidence, wellbeing and a sense of belonging. They also report a greater understanding of food waste and its environmental impact.

"[It was a] really rewarding experience. Amazing to learn more about food safety and nutrition as well as meet a variety of people and hear about their experiences."

"It has made me have a better understanding of food waste and has made me more confident and organised."

For young people, volunteering at Shrewsbury Food Hub not only supports personal development but also equips them with transferable skills for their future careers. Young people report that they have learnt:

"Different skills that can be transferred across all career paths"

and that their volunteering would show employers that:

"I am a hard worker".

10.6 Increasing environmental awareness

For many volunteering at the Hub deepens understanding of climate issues and food waste, encouraging more sustainable behaviours and attitudes. Volunteers report increased awareness of food systems and the scale of the problem of food waste. First-hand experience of surplus food deepens understanding and often inspires advocacy. This strengthens the Hub's wider impact, as volunteers act as informal ambassadors, raising awareness and influencing others.

"I don't waste food at home now. I use everything."

"I tell everyone about the Hub. I hope more people will see how much food is going to waste."

10.7 A shared impact

Over the past decade, Shrewsbury Food Hub’s volunteers have helped transform surplus food into community benefit, sharing nearly 1,500 tonnes of surplus with local people. They have also created a community of volunteers, with a powerful sense of shared purpose, connection and pride. Volunteers see themselves as reliable, flexible team players contributing to something bigger than themselves. As one volunteer reflected:

“Individually we are limited in what we do, but together we move mountains.”



Figure 10: Word cloud from 70 volunteer responses

11.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Over the past decade, Shrewsbury Food Hub has evolved into a thriving and dynamic organisation. It has built a trusted, locally embedded model that not only redistributes surplus food at scale, but also strengthens communities, improves wellbeing and contributes to a more sustainable food system. Its reach across community groups, schools, suppliers and partners demonstrates a deeply connected network, rooted in collaboration and shared purpose.

A defining feature of the Hub's success is its energy, culture and people. The commitment of staff and volunteers, combined with a flexible, responsive approach, has enabled the organisation to grow rapidly while maintaining strong relationships and a clear sense of mission. This culture of openness, innovation and practical action has created an organisation that is both effective and widely valued.

Whilst the Hub has always counted the tonnage of food 'rescued' and collected strong anecdotal evidence, until this exercise a comprehensive analysis of impact, in all its guises, had not been undertaken. The results are in and are impressive. Across four significant headings the Hub is making a real difference: environmental, social, local systems (food related) and volunteering. This is reflected in a very positive return on investment.

As the Hub grows, it is experiencing some of the challenges common to maturing organisations. This study was not intended to be a programme review. However, it would be remiss not to share recommendations to guide the organisation through its next phase and build on the strong foundations now in place. In particular, the review highlights the need for clearer and more integrated data systems that better reflect the Food Hub's responsive and community-led way of working. More accessible and joined-up systems would improve communication, reduce inefficiencies, and support a more complete understanding of the Hub's impact.

Following on from this, this study demonstrates the importance of more consistent and systematic data capture. Establishing clear definitions, methodologies, and routine processes for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data would strengthen the reliability, comparability and usefulness of reporting. This can be captured in a 'monitoring and evaluation' framework.

Finally, there is a need for stronger alignment across teams, activities and organisational priorities. Developing a shared outcomes framework, embedding impact measurement across all projects, and strengthening collaboration between operational, fundraising, volunteer and community-facing teams would help create a more unified approach to demonstrating and achieving impact.

Addressing these areas now will help to position the Hub for further growth if that is the desire. Certainly, the need is there and there are significant opportunities to explore including expanding reach, deepening community engagement, and developing activities such as the Community Kitchen.

Finally, as the Hub grows it will be challenging but important to:

- **Clearly communicate** the full scope of the Hub's work across all stakeholders to ensure that its broader social, environmental and system-wide impact is widely understood
- **Continue to invest in volunteers** ensuring they remain central to the organisation's identity and future development.
- **Continue to invest in reliable and impactful partnerships** with other local organisations.

Shrewsbury Food Hub enters its second decade as a confident, established and highly respected organisation, with a clear sense of purpose. This is a strong platform for future growth. With thoughtful development of its systems and continued investment in its people and partnerships, it is well placed to deepen its impact and play an even greater role in shaping a more connected, resilient and sustainable local food system.

12.0 Appendix

A: List of key informants

Staff/trustees

Ali Thomas, Co-Founder and Project Manager

Andrew Howe, Trustee (former Chair)

Ben Richards, Redistribution Manager

Cherry Teearu, Fundraiser

David Johns, Head of Fundraising

Jo Powell, Chair of Trustees

John Hughes, Depot Co-ordinator

Lynne Hall, Communications

Mike Thompson, Fundraiser

Silvia Birchall, Finance officer

Tammy Bloodworth, CEO

Tony Gaskin, IT/Data management

Others

Katy Anderson, Co-Founder

Rhiannon Bowen, Community Foodshare organiser

Amanda Cheeseman, Shropshire Council

Steve Guy, Freelance Chef

Charlotte Stokes, Pig Farmer

Greg Westwood, National Lottery

10 Foodshare volunteers

10 Foodshare recipients

5 community kitchen volunteers

4 depot volunteers

B: Methodology notes and assumptions

The value of volunteer hours in 25/26 is calculated based on a minimum wage of £12.21 per hour.

Meals saved calculations assume a meal weight of 420g, in line with WRAP guidance

<https://www.wrap.ngo/system/files/2020-09/WRAP-Expressing%20redistributed%20food%20surplus%20as%20meal%20equivalents%20%28WRAP%20guidance%29.pdf>

Value of the food calculation based on WRAP methodology, which uses an estimated value per tonne of £3099 in 2014, adjusted for inflation

<https://www.wrap.ngo/sites/default/files/2026-03/WRAP-Redistribution-Food-Surplus-UK-2015-2024-Methodology-Data-Sheet-v2.pdf>

Price of carbon, per tonne of CO₂e is based on government estimates from the Green Book. In 2025 the central estimate was £306/tonne

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/valuation-of-energy-use-and-greenhouse-gas-emissions-for-appraisal>

[Harper Adams report for Taste With No Waste 2023](#)

C: Key milestones 2016-2026**2016–17**

- Launch of Shrewsbury Food Hub with 14 tonnes of surplus food rescued
- Started with 3 supermarkets and 5 community groups
- Ambient food only, 3-5 day a week operation

2017–18

- Move into first Depot and first part time coordinator
- Supported 46 community groups and Foodshare tables
- Funding to establish the Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance to tackle food poverty

2018–19

- Chilled and frozen food project launched, redistributing 5 tonnes
- Expansion of Foodshare tables begins
- Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance launches Food Poverty Action Plan and Shropshire Larder website

2019–20

- Shared food equivalent to almost 195,000 meals
- Supported 63 community groups
- Move to new Depot after Storm Ciara tore the roof off the depot

2020–21

- COVID-19 pandemic begins; Hub shifts to 7-day operation
- Volunteers reduce from 119 to 59 due to shielding
- Shift in operation to expand Foodshares, supplementing with surplus from FareShare
- Funding for Ronnie the van
- Supported foodbanks across Shropshire with 123 pallets of store cupboard food from DEFRA and grants from UNICEF to buy fresh fruits and vegetables
- Funding to establish the Shropshire Good Food Partnership to support systems-based food resilience

2021–22

- Queen's Award for Voluntary Service
- Walk against waste challenge launched
- Shropshire Food Poverty Alliance and Shropshire Good Food Partnership, became independent entities, strengthening the wider system infrastructure.

2022–23

- Taste with No Waste campaign launched, engaging over 1,000 households
- Redistributed food worth £1.1 million
- Funding for community fridges and freezers
- Soupersonic cooking project trialled to transform surplus veg into meals

2023–24

- Rescued over 214 tonnes of surplus food
- Visit from Queen Camilla
- Community Kitchen strengthens food waste education and skills development

2024–25

- Secured £304k National Lottery Community Fund grant
- Community Kitchen expanded, producing 15,000 meals, and engaging 280 people
- Co-founders awarded honorary masters

2025-26

- Shrewsbury Food Hub celebrates 10 years
- Starts to encourage a donation at Foodshares of £2
- Record 272 Tonnes of food shared with the community

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E: Harper Adams University Studies

[Taste With No Waste Campaign Evaluation Findings 20 June 2023](#)

[Environmental Social and Economic Impacts of Surplus Food Redistribution - A Case Study](#)



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