

NOURISHING WEST SUSSEX



@ukharvest



ukharvest.org.uk

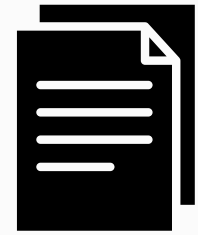


COMMUNITY FOOD HUBS

**SOCIAL IMPACT
EVALUATION '24**



ABOUT THIS REPORT



This is a summary of the full report that was submitted to West Sussex County Council in September 2024.

The purpose of the **NOURISHING WEST SUSSEX** report is to share key findings with our partners and stakeholders who wish to learn more about the Community Food Hub initiative that has operated across West Sussex since May 2023.

We are grateful for guidance provided by Kelly Heller, Alex Street and their colleagues at the County Council.

This report was prepared by Will Wallace, on behalf of UKHarvest, with support from Andrew Meredith and Tash McKean.

To view the full report, please email: info@ukharvest.org.uk

ABOUT THIS PROGRAMME



The “Food Waste Minimisation and Surplus Food Redistribution Programme” is the result of the award-winning partnership between UKHarvest and West Sussex County Council.

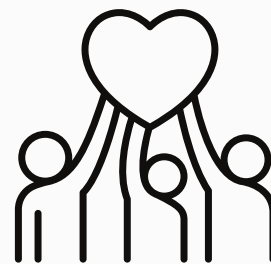
For each district and borough in West Sussex, there is a monthly Community Food Hub that returns surplus food to the supply chain in communities where food waste is most prevalent.



In November 2023, the initiative received a National Recycling Award from MRW in recognition of the positive environmental and social outcomes that have been achieved.

FOREWORD

Food is at the heart of every community. Whether on our high streets or in our homes, it brings people together, sustains us and nourishes body, mind and soul.



And yet, in the UK today, good food is being needlessly wasted at a time when we face the reality of higher retail prices.

UKHarvest is proud to work with West Sussex County Council to find sustainable solutions to the issues of food waste and food insecurity that exist in communities across West Sussex.

“ Our customers have spoken and we have listened. ”



This report highlights the incredible impact that Community Food Hubs have made in the lives of customers and their families.

Here, you will find clear evidence that we actively support them to reduce food waste while becoming more resourceful and resilient.

The findings show the key areas where we are succeeding through redistribution, education and social connection.

None of this would have been possible without the dedication of volunteers at each Community Food Hub across the county.

Thanks to the partnership that we have formed with the County Council, we can find clear evidence that this initiative has made a positive impact in the lives of people, their families and their communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Yvonne Thomson".

Yvonne Thomson
CEO and Founder
UKHARVEST

CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION

Establishing the purpose and content of the report and its findings

2 BACKGROUND

Understanding the context for the Community Food Hubs and our mission

3 HUBS OVERVIEW

Key information for each of the seven Community Food Hubs that we surveyed

4 METHODOLOGY

How we designed and conducted the survey in line with our ethical framework

7 KEY FINDINGS

Overview of the different themes that were explored by the survey

8 FOOD WASTE

How the Community Food Hubs support customers to reduce household food waste

9 FOOD SECURITY

How the Community Food Hubs enable customers to access good affordable food

10 NUTRITION & DIET

How the Community Food Hubs improve the health and physical wellbeing of customers

11 COMMUNITY SUPPORT

How the Community Food Hubs connect customers with people and local services

12 NEXT STEPS

The five recommendations to improve the Community Food Hubs

14 REFERENCES



INTRODUCTION

The seven Community Food Hubs, delivered by the partnership between UKHarvest and WSCC, have become an integral part of people's lives in communities throughout West Sussex.

At each location, customers access affordable nutritious food, learn how to reduce household food waste, meet new people, build connections and access crucial additional support for the other problems that they experience in their lives.



This report summarises the findings of the most recent evaluation that was conducted at all seven Community Food Hubs, between 10 July and 7 August 2024.

With a participation rate of 60%, a total of 216 customers kindly volunteered their time to complete the questionnaire.

The findings show that the Community Food Hubs have helped to reduce food waste, improve food security, boost nutrition, and connect people across West Sussex.

Informed by the findings, a set of five recommendations have been made for UKHarvest and WSCC to develop the Hubs further and maximise their potential to bring about meaningful change.

BACKGROUND

Food waste is ‘the decrease in quantity or quality of food along the food supply chain ... [occurring] at the retail or consumption level.’^[1]

In the United Kingdom, it is estimated that the total amount of food that was wasted in 2021 was 10.7 million tonnes; approximately 60% of this (6.4 Mt) came from British households alone.^[2]

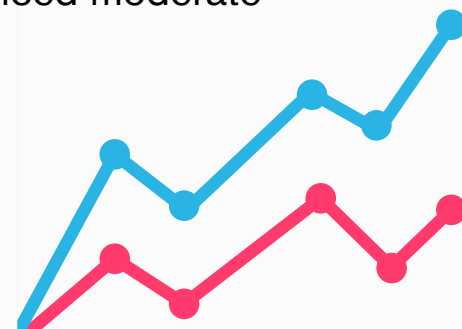
Local government data show that, in West Sussex, 40% of average household waste is food, of which approximately 70% is avoidable.^[3]



Food security is ‘when all people, at all times, have physical, social and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life.’^[4]





In the UK, recent data released by HM Government revealed that the number of individuals living in food insecure households increased from 4.7 million in 2021/22 to 7.2 million in 2022/23.^[5]

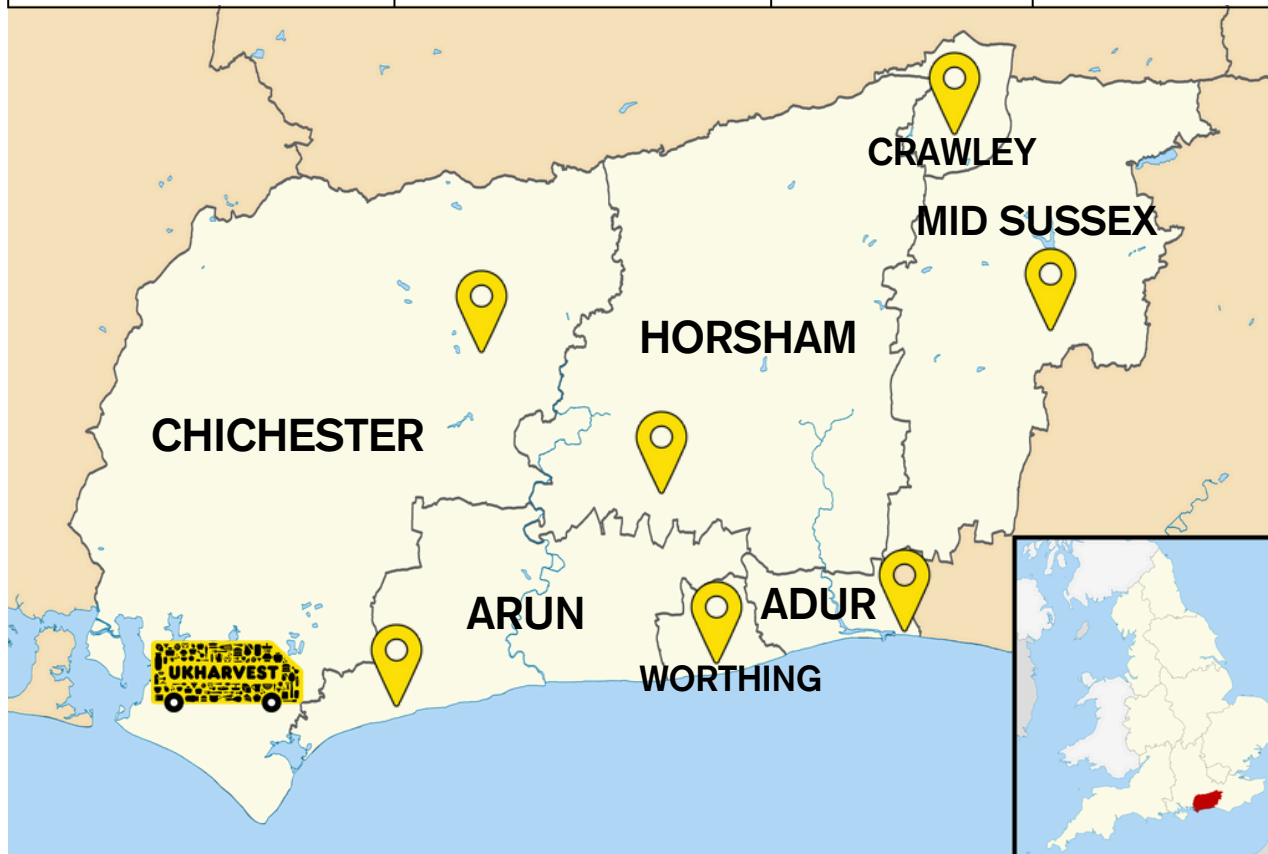
The most recent round of regular surveys, conducted by the Food Foundation, found that 13.6% of households experienced moderate or severe levels of food insecurity in June 2024.^[6]



HUBS OVERVIEW

These are the seven Community Food Hubs that are currently operated by UKHarvest and West Sussex County Council:

 COMMUNITY FOOD HUB	 COUNTY SUBDIVISION	 NO. OF RESIDENTS	 NO. OF HOUSEHOLDS
BOGNOR REGIS	ARUN DISTRICT	70,147	30,865
CRAWLEY	CRAWLEY BOROUGH	121,962	46,904
HAYWARDS HEATH	MID SUSSEX DISTRICT	40,840	17,263
PETWORTH	CHICHESTER DISTRICT	3,047	1,387
SOUTHWICK	ADUR DISTRICT	13,415	5,444
STORRINGTON	HORSHAM DISTRICT	10,355	4,623
WORTHING	WORTHING BOROUGH	112,988	50,322



Population estimates for six locations are based on BUA aggregate data; estimates for the seventh location (Petworth) are based on civil parish data.^[7]

METHODOLOGY

A mixed-method questionnaire was designed to measure the level of food insecurity experienced by customers and the strength of social impact that they perceived the Community Food Hubs to have made in their lives.

Customers at all seven locations were engaged over a four-week period in July 2024, during which they were introduced to the purpose and aims of the survey, and the benefits of their participation.

Questionnaires were completed and collected from customers over a five-week period in July and August 2024. There was clear emphasis on the voluntary nature of their participation and the respect that would be given to their confidentiality and personal privacy.

Across all seven locations, a total of 216 out of 360 customers completed the survey: an overall participation rate of 60.0%.



3 IN 5
CUSTOMERS
took part in the survey

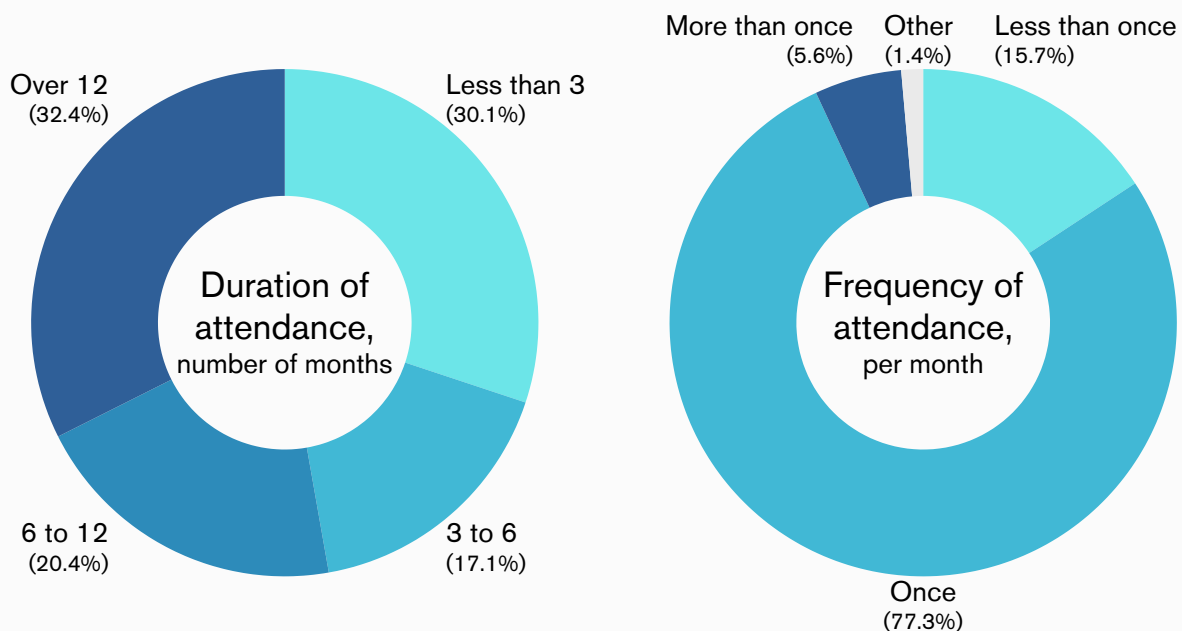
The cover page contained information about the purpose of the survey, its benefits, the handling of data, and lines of accountability, should customers wish to make enquiries or raise concerns about conduct.

Customers were asked to give their informed consent, showing that they had read, understood and considered the information before them.

The questionnaire was primarily based on a previous survey, conducted in 2023, to enable both sets of findings to be compared. The opening set of close-ended multiple-choice questions asked customers to identify the duration and frequency of their visits to the Community Food Hubs.

Overall, 32.4% of customers reported that they had attended for over twelve months and 30.1% for less than three.

The frequency of attendance was typically once per month; however, at Petworth, 36.4% of customers attend more than once a month. It is probable that these customers also attended the Hub that takes place in Midhurst, a nearby town also located in the South Downs.



This was followed by a list of seven statements about the impact of the Community Food Hubs, including social connection, wellbeing, access to good food, nutrition and food waste reduction.

Food insecurity was measured by customers' responses to a series of questions, largely based on the Food Insecurity Experience Scale Survey Module. Each question was designated as an indicator of one of three levels of food insecurity: (i) mild, (ii) moderate and (iii) severe.

Finally, customers were asked five unstructured open-ended questions that enabled them to describe their lived experiences and express their views about the Community Food Hubs.



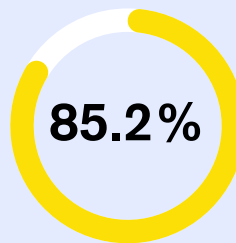
KEY FINDINGS

Across all 216 responses, there were a range of different findings that demonstrate the social value and impact of the Community Food Hubs.



FOOD WASTE

“It is wonderful to save food from going to landfill”
(Customer 168)

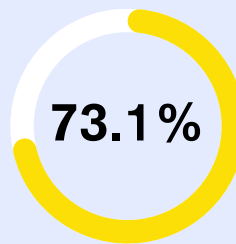


agreed that the Hubs had helped them to reduce their food waste.



FOOD SECURITY

“I feel loved by getting amazing food I could not normally afford”
(Customer 101)

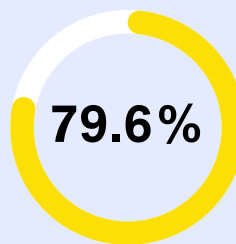


agreed that the Hubs had given them access to food that they otherwise cannot afford.



NUTRITION & DIET

“It helps me to change my diet to a healthier way of living”
(Customer 19)

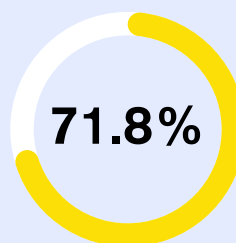


agreed that the Hubs had a positive impact on the amount of fruit and vegetables that they eat.



COMMUNITY SUPPORT

“A friendly environment ... no one judges or looks down on anyone”
(Customer 63)



agreed that the Hubs had improved their wellbeing.



FOOD WASTE

Customers collect surplus food originally destined for landfill, while receiving support and advice to help them reduce their own household food waste.



I feel good about preventing food waste. I meet my friends and learn new things.
(Customer 90)

When asked to give an example of a useful food waste prevention tip that they had learned, customers described a range of different strategies to reduce the amount of food wasted at home.

This included general advice that is regularly shared by staff and volunteers, such as meal planning, awareness of expiry dates and freezing items to minimise unnecessary food waste.

Examples included tips that were shared as part of the “Fight Against Food Waste” awareness campaign and the live cooking demonstrations that took place at all seven Hubs between July 2023 and January 2024.

It is wonderful to save food going to landfill [and] try food I wouldn't have thought of buying.
(Customer 168)

By successfully describing a variety of food waste prevention tips that are shared at the Community Food Hubs, customers showed that they have effectively engaged with this information.

85.2%

agreed that the Hubs had helped them to reduce their food waste.

FOOD SECURITY

Gaining access to a good selection of fresh and ambient food provided essential support to customers who have struggled with the increased cost of living.



It helps me by making my worrying less about food, that I'm not alone and there is help.
(Customer 63)

Community Food Hubs provide access to food that has become more expensive in recent years. Customers are not required to pay for what they collect; there is an optional donation of £3.50 per household.

Experiences of severe food insecurity were reported to be less prevalent among customers who attended the Community Food Hubs over a longer period during the previous twelve months.

31.8% of customers who attended for six to twelve months reported experiences of severe food insecurity, compared with 46.2% of those who attended for fewer than three months.

With the current economic situation, many find it hard to afford good quality food.
(Customer 93)

Likewise, 40.9% of customers who attended for six to twelve months reported that they were in a state of food security, compared with 30.8% of those who attended for fewer than three months.

73.1%

agreed that the Hubs had given them access to food that they otherwise cannot afford.

NUTRITION & DIET

Well-established links with producers and retailers ensure that key nutritional options are available. Customers can access a range of healthy food items.



It has [enabled] us to keep having fruit and veg options with all our meals.
(Customer 36)

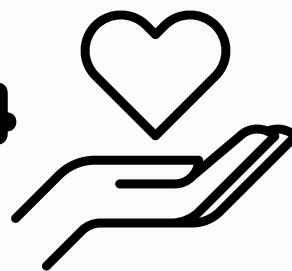
Community Food Hubs regularly provide items such as as fruit, vegetables, carbs and protein. Customers are encouraged to try new items by volunteers who share tips and advice for preparing and cooking them.

The provision of fruit and vegetables was singled out by customers who described the nutritional benefits of being able to access these items.

I wouldn't normally have this much fruit and veg to eat if I was just using supermarkets.
(Customer 72)

Using the Social Value Bank developed by the Housing Association Charitable Trust [HACT], it is estimated that the dietary improvement reported by customers has generated:

£642,564
in social value



79.6%

agreed that the Hubs had a positive impact on the amount of fruit and vegetables that they eat.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT

The monthly Community Food Hubs actively prevent social isolation and promote social inclusion by being accessible and facilitating wrap-around support services.



A great way to support the local community and bring people together.
(Customer 185)

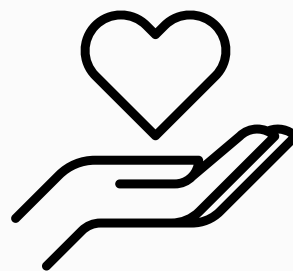
The Hubs are spaces where individuals and groups regularly meet. Over time, customers become more familiar and consequently form social connections with each other and with staff and volunteers.

Visits from external agencies are facilitated, providing regular “wrap-around support” to customers and offering a range of services. This enables access to advice and support for problems other than food insecurity

Spoke to the water people who were at the Hub and now I'm sorting out the debt I owe.
(Customer 70)

Using the HACT Social Value Bank, it is estimated that regular attendance and membership of these social groups has generated:

£259,215
in social value



71.8%

agreed that the Hubs had improved their wellbeing.

NEXT STEPS

Responses from customers provided useful insights into their experience and recommendations to improve the Community Food Hubs.



The following five recommendations have been designed and proposed to extend reach, increase engagement and enhance accessibility.

EDUCATION

Sharing information and improving knowledge has equipped customers with the skills that are necessary to reduce their household food waste.

1

Continue to regularly engage Community Food Hub customers with a range of educational interventions.

ARRANGEMENTS

Several customers flagged concerns about the timing of the Worthing Hub, which coincides with parking charges on nearby residential streets.

2

Review the arrangements for each Community Food Hub, including their frequency and duration.

QUEUING SYSTEM

Several elderly customers reported that queuing could be physically demanding, while parents with young children reported their own concerns.

3

Evaluate the efficacy of the current queuing system that is used at five of the Community Food Hubs.

FOOD REDISTRIBUTION

Some customers stated that they do not believe that the amount of food they receive is proportionate to the number of mouths that they feed.

4

Evaluate the efficacy of the current process by which food is physically redistributed to customers.

WRAP-AROUND SUPPORT

Only 51.8% of customers reported that they perceived Community Food Hubs to be places where they could access support from external agencies.

5

Improve the communication methods used to advertise the wrap-around support that is available to customers.



REFERENCES

- [1] FAO (2019). The State of Food and Agriculture 2019: Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction. Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/state-food-and-agriculture-2019-moving-forward-food-loss-and-waste-reduction>.
- [2] WRAP (2023). UK Food Waste & Food Surplus – Key Facts. The Waste and Resources Action Programme. Available at: <https://www.wrap.ngo/sites/default/files/2024-01/WRAP-Food-Surplus-and-Waste-in-the-UK-Key-Facts%20November-2023.pdf>.
- [3] WSCC (2024). Fight against food waste: Tips on how to reduce your food waste. West Sussex County Council. Available at: <https://www.westsussex.gov.uk/land-waste-and-housing/waste-and-recycling/recycling-and-waste-prevention/fight-against-food-waste/>.
- [4] FAO (2024). The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2024. Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nations. Available at: <https://openknowledge.fao.org/items/09ed8fec-480e-4432-832c-5b56c672ed92>.
- [5] DWP (2023). Households below average income: for financial years ending 1995 to 2002. Department for Work and Pensions. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/households-below-average-income-for-financial-years-ending-1995-to-2022>.
- [6] Food Foundation (2024). Food Insecurity Tracking. Food Foundation. Available at: <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking>.
- [7] ONS (2022). Census 2021: population estimates. Office of National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates>. Data mapped at: <https://censusdata.uk/map>.

**To view the full report, please email:
info@ukharvest.org.uk**



@UKHarvest | www.ukharvest.org.uk | 01243 696940
Registered Charity Number 1171916