

January 29, 2026

Additional information from FareShare Cymru following oral evidence session 19/01/26 - Access to Healthy Affordable Food

Thank you for giving FareShare Cymru the opportunity to give oral evidence as part of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into access to healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

We wanted to follow up on the oral evidence given at the session to give greater clarity and further information.

1. Background

FareShare Cymru is Wales' leading redistribution organisation in Wales. We take good quality surplus food from the food and drink industry and prevent this from being wasted, instead redistributing it to charities and community groups that do social good within their communities. In 2024 we were named organisation of the year at the Wales Charity Awards and won the Environmental Champion Award at the St Davids Awards in the same year. We have been redistributing good food to charities and community groups in Wales since 2011. Between Jan-Dec 2025:

- We redistributed over 1223t across Wales
- 47% of this was Fruit and Veg
- 256 charities and community groups supported
- 2.91 million meals
- Food value of £3.48 million
- c. 29440 beneficiaries a week

2. Who we work with

Our members include panty's, community kitchens, homeless hostels, lunch clubs for the elderly, cookery classes, refuges for people fleeing domestic violence, and those supporting young people, care leavers and much more. 95% of the organisations that we support with food are not only providing emergency food aid and 75% of our members are open throughout the year, including school holidays and some run specific holiday programmes. We currently have over 110 organisations on a waiting list in South Wales alone.

The table below gives an idea of the breadth of organisation types and individuals that are being supported.

Primary beneficiary groups of members		Types of organisation	
Families with children	31%	Community centre	28%
The local community	21%	Food service only/ food focused organisations	26%
People on no/low income	19%	School	17%
Children under 18	7%	Faith organisations	10%
Older people	7%	Day centre / drop in centre	7%
Homeless people and rough sleepers	4%	Advice / resource centre	7%
Asylum seekers and refugees	2%	Residential setting	2%
Others - Black and ethnic minorities; ex-offenders, lone parents, long-term unemployed, NEETs, people affected by domestic violence, people with drug and alcohol addiction, people with learning difficulties, people with mental health problems, people with physical difficulties, young people 11-22, young people in care.		Others - Food growing/gardening; Local authority, out of school club, training centre	

3. What our charity and community group members tell us

Each year we/FSUK run a survey of our members. The following results are from the survey that took place in Jan 2025 (for 2024-25). We are just completing the latest survey (for 2025-26) and we would be happy to share the results when they are available.

The 2024 survey (Jan 2025) showed our food makes a difference to the health and wellbeing and nutrition of the clients of the charities and community groups that we support.¹

It showed that receiving food from FareShare helps our charity and community member partners to....

i. Increase access to affordable and nutritious food

- 92% are able to provide more food
- 85% could give a greater variety of food
- 3 in 4 could provide food with a better nutritional value

ii. Reach more people and expand their services

- 33% started running new services
- 2 in 3 increase the number of people they reach by an average of 30 per week

¹ [Impact-report-2024-condensed.pdf](#)

It also showed that as a result of using food services powered by FareShare people experienced...

i. Improved health and wellbeing

- 81% increased overall wellbeing
- 3 in 4 eat a healthier diet
- 2 in 3 improve their physical health

ii. Access to healthier food

- 88% tried new foods
- 84% ate more fruit and veg
- 72% skip fewer meals

iii. As well as reduced financial stress and more community connection

iv. 2 in 3 parents say their children do better in school

We are just completing the latest survey (for 2025-26) and we would be happy to share the results when they are available. However early results show that:

- 87% of respondents have seen an increase or a significant increase in demand for their services
- 78% responded they were worried about covering operational costs

And that by receiving food from FareShare Cymru, their **organisation** is able to..

- 87% responded that it enabled them to provide an increased variety of food
- 91% responded that it enabled them to provide more food
- 85% responded that it enabled them to provide healthier food
- 65% responded that it enabled them to provide better quality food
- 80% responded that it enabled them to provide more fruit and vegetables
- 99% responded that it enabled them to make more of a difference in their local community.

The 2023 FareShare UK report also shows the impact of FareShare food on individuals². In summary this showed that in all settings, those accessing FareShare food reported that they had improved access to food.

- A net score of +76% of respondents said that thanks to being able to access FareShare food, they are now able to eat more fruit and vegetables.
- 76% also said that they ate healthier meals.
- A further 57% noted that because they had been able to access FareShare food, they were now skipping less meals.

Without food support, many respondents felt they would have access to less food, fewer meals, or that they would have to resort to cutting back, skipping meals and ultimately, going hungry. Respondents also emphasised that without this food they would have less choice. They noted they would access less fresh produce and felt their health would reduce. In terms of physical health, survey responses suggested

² [2023-Impact-on-Individuals-FS-Branded-Report.pdf](#)

that increased food variety, better food quality and more fruit and vegetables led to healthier eating habits, improving nutrition.

4. The value of what we do

According to an SROI study³ undertaken by FareShare UK, for every £1 FareShare receives, together with its network partners and local charities, it generates £13 in social and economic value. Of this, £8.45 is saved by the state, thanks to reduced pressure on public services, and £4.55 directly benefits individuals through lower food costs and access to essential services. (University of Hertfordshire).

5. Issues and Barriers

- **Cost of food - Uk food prices remain high.** Food inflation was reported to have slowed in latter part of 2025 (down to 3.5% in November 2025) according to ONS. This means that food prices are still going up but at a slower rate. The Food Foundation reported that (Nov 2025) the - basic basket price has continued to increase. Women's baskets have increased by 27.4% since 2022, and men's by 30.2%. Their food insecurity tracker also found that half of food insecure households are cutting back on vegetables and two thirds are cutting back on fruit
- **Cost of fuel to cook food** - Citizens Advice data highlights a dramatic increase in the number of people seeking help with energy debt - these cases surged by 144% between 2019 and 2024.⁴
- **Volunteer availability** - whilst reports state that volunteering levels are relatively stable in Wales⁵ the need for volunteers amongst the community organisations and charities working with food support continues to grow as the need and demand grows. Evidence in Scotland⁶ has suggested that the cost-of-living crisis is having an impact on people's ability to volunteer impacting recruitment and retention and the number of hours they are able to give for a variety of reasons.
- **Barriers to supplying surplus food** - additional costs associated with this in terms of keeping the food safe, physically getting hold of it, storage, transport and other expenses as well as legal protections.
- **Change in food types** of surplus food available - due to a range of factors including Brexit, wars, the cost-of-living impact on businesses and climate change the type of surplus food available for redistribution has shifted. This has meant that we are working with different food and these can be more 'difficult' to redistribute due their nature. However, this has also seen a shift to some healthier and more nutritious food including an increase in fruit and vegetables. This has meant a change for both ourselves and for the community organisations and charities we support.

³ [FareShare Sareholders Report_04_25-Final-1.pdf](#)

⁴ [Poverty in Wales 2025 | Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#)

⁵ [National Survey for Wales headline results: April 2024 to March 2025 \[HTML\] | GOV.WALES](#)

⁶ [The State of Volunteering in Scotland 2025 report](#)

- **Funding - the funding climate is getting ever more competitive** for us and for the charities and community groups that we support, in addition there is also the need for multi-year funding to support change to happen and for services to grow.
- **Cooking ability/ Food literacy** - can be an issue in some areas according to anecdotal evidence from the charities and communities that we support. This isn't just about how to cook, or the ability to cook but the ability to use healthy foods from scratch, but is also about using new and unusual foods. Some quotes from our community food members include:
 'There was no issue but just we had recently too many boxes of spring onions which our clients had no idea what to do with', anecdotally we have also been told 'when we received a crate of celeriac the majority of those that came in to see us had never seen one before'.

6. Examples of solutions and good practice

6.1. What our members do every day - using FareShare food for Social Good

Below are quotes from charities and community groups about the benefits of accessing food from FareShare Cymru from our 2025 survey:

'Having a reliable varied source of food from FareShare Cymru gives us stability and ensures our members have a variety of items. Having more fresh items (fruit/veg/chilled) is super. This aids members to make "proper meals"'

Hope Pantry, Merthyr Tydfil

'Working with FareShare Cymru makes a significant and tangible difference to our organisation and the community we serve. Access to a consistent supply of good-quality surplus food allows us to provide nutritious meals to people experiencing food poverty while keeping our services affordable and sustainable. This support enables us to redirect limited funding towards wider community activities, wellbeing support, and tackling social isolation rather than food costs alone'

'The food we receive from FareShare [Cymru] allows us to offer community members a real range of groceries, including healthy options, and things they may not have otherwise tried. This not only reduces the impacts of the food insecurity they are facing, but offering this provision also allows us to get to know the community better and identify further need.'

Tavs Centre, Cardiff

'By having a variety of fresh food delivered we are able to ensure our families are able to eat well. Children directly benefit by not going hungry. We have been able to carry out food cooking lessons with the children in our school. The amount of food we can offer to our families has increased- as it is good food families are not as embarrassed to use our services.'

Big Bocs Bwyd Trimsaran, Carmarthenshire

Further examples and case studies are available on our website.⁷

⁷ [News - FareShare Cymru](#)

6.2. Working to encourage greater take up of cooking and increase acceptance of produce

Since the pandemic we have been working hard to encourage our members to **move away from emergency food provision** (that was needed during the pandemic) - we call this 'more than food'. The move back has been harder than the move towards emergency food aid provision however, only around 1% of our members are now purely foodbanks.

We have also been working hard to encourage our members to take more fruit and vegetables - fresh produce as part of their food membership - and this is now working, although we are still getting some small push back occasionally, we are working to understand the reasons behind that.

As well as encouraging members to move back to or **incorporate some form of community cooking in their offering**. Evidence carried out by the University of Oxford shows that there are wellbeing and mental health benefits from 'social eating'. In fact the research states: "Those who eat socially more often feel happier and are more satisfied with life, are more trusting of others, are more engaged with their local communities, and have more friends they can depend on for support." Other research shows links between children and teenagers who regularly sit down for meals with others, and a healthier diet, including more fruits, vegetables, and nutrients.

6.3. Cooking training and recipes

We are working to secure funding to employ a culinary/cooking and nutrition lead to expand on a **cooking training** trial in early 2025. This will look to teach community groups how to use the surplus food that we can provide to produce nutritional and healthy meals, how to reduce waste and how they can use the pop-up kitchens (see below) to do so. The training can be used by these community cooks and passed on to individuals and households within their communities (aiming to help overcome the food literacy issues). Here is a quote from one of our members:

'We are holding weekly cooking demonstrations to show the community what they could be making with the produce. We have received some vegetables that no one has ever seen before, so being able to show people how to use a new vegetable and give them a taste of it really goes a long way...'

We are also planning to train some of our volunteers and providing some meals for our volunteers (some of whom are food insecure themselves).

We also regularly produce/ circulate **recipes** provided by our in-house nutrition volunteer or by Cardiff and Vale dietetics colleagues. The cooking project detailed above will also look to develop recipes that can be shared.

6.4. Pop-up kitchens

In 2024-25 FareShare Cymru gave out 11 pop-up kitchens to Community Food Members covering Carmarthenshire to RCT. These consisted of a portable oven, two induction hobs, rice cooker, steamer, air fryer and pans as well as crockery and utensils. These were primarily given to organisations that did not have access to a

kitchen in order to enable them to cook - providing meals, cookery demonstration or increasing cooking skills. A case study can be found on our website.⁸

6.5. Zero Waste Food Dispensers

To date during 2025-26 FareShare Cymru has given out 11 sets of zero-waste food dispensers to enable the charities and community groups we work with to accept dry catering-sized items including pasta, rice, flour etc. The sets consisted of two gravity bins and one scoop bin. A case study can be found on our website.⁹ We have a further 9 sets to distribute, but unfortunately progress has been slower than hoped due to the EHO having to sign off each project.

6.6. Redistribution Kitchen Wales

The Redistribution Kitchen Wales (RKW) project started as a way to use and repurpose harder-to-use surplus food so that more people could easily access nutritious meals. Funding for the project was awarded by the Sustainable Food Challenge, a partnership between Cardiff Council, Monmouthshire County Council, the Cardiff Capital Region Challenge Fund, and Welsh Government, supported by the SBRI (Small Business Research Initiative) Centre of Excellence.

RKW aimed to create healthy and nutritious ready meals from surplus food that could be used by our charity and community group members and their clients (also looked at reducing the environmental impact of the packaging, through e.g. a reuse scheme) - partnership project CAVC, Dietetics, Zero2Five, Cardiff University, Castell Howell - successful and groundbreaking in a number of ways e.g. ability to produce nutritional info on the ready meals - produced individual and community sized meals. Further information can be provided if requested. A few extra pieces can be read on our.¹⁰

6.7. Surplus with Purpose Cymru

The Surplus with Purpose Cymru fund is open to Welsh companies that have food that's edible yet will be wasted because it's too costly or unsuitable for commercial use. The fund aims to overcome the barriers that Welsh food and drink businesses (farmers, growers, producers, manufacturers, wholesalers etc.) face when considering redistributing surplus food to charity. It helps with the additional costs of tasks associated with redistributing surplus food and keeping it safe such as labour, packaging, freezing, harvesting and transport.

In 2024-25 an additional 324t of food from Welsh food and drink businesses was saved from being wasted - enough to contribute to 771,796 meals. 80% of this was produce with the remaining 20% being milk.¹¹

⁸ [BARC Case Study.docx](#)

⁹ [Hope at the Hive.docx](#)

¹⁰ [RKW at Hope St Mellons - FareShare Cymru](#)

[Introducing our Redistribution Kitchen Wales Project - FareShare Cymru](#)

[Press Release: FareShare Cymru's Redistribution Kitchen Wales Project Makes Strides in Combating Food Waste and Hunger. - FareShare Cymru](#)

¹¹ A case study can be read here [Donating surplus food doesn't cost the Earth! - FareShare Cymru](#)

6.8. Community Food Provision Map

The community food provision map¹² was produced in collaboration with Cardiff University and is now embedded in our practice. The tool has improved our visibility of current community food provision across Wales and enabled us and others to better identify and target where support is most needed.

7. What more can be done?

- With continued and additional support and resources **FareShare Cymru** could expand our operations faster supporting more areas, organistaions and ultimately households and individuals - we have plans to expand further into West Wales as well as reducing our waiting list. We could also expand some of our already successful initiatives.
- **Celebrate and support the community food sector** - Wales' diverse community food sector should be celebrated for its role in strengthening and creating cohesive communities. Grassroots organisations rooted in communities are vital to creating a good food movement and supporting people who need it most. However, too many organisations are struggling with cost pressures, scarce funding and increasing demand.
- **Embed SWP Cymru** which contributes to strengthening local supply chains and getting Welsh produce onto Welsh plates – strengthening communities, supporting local growers, and reducing food waste. We know it's massively better if surplus food feeds people, rather than feeding animals or biowaste facilities, but getting food to people costs more. FareShare's Surplus with Purpose initiative is a proven subsidy scheme which levels the playing field for farmers and food producers so they can make best use of their excess food. The current Welsh Government has supported FareShare Cymru to deliver the Surplus with Purpose Cymru scheme aimed at reducing the barriers to surplus food redistribution. We would advocate for the continued support of this scheme whilst working towards embedding it into wider food system support schemes - including building it into agricultural subsidy reforms such as the Sustainable Farming Scheme and creating a Manufacturing and Hospitality fund that supports innovation and helps unlock harder-to-reach surplus.
- **Clarify legal protections around using surplus food.** While many businesses have embraced the opportunity to donate surplus food, some have voiced concerns about the potential legal implications of doing so. Food safety laws still apply when food is donated and a perception that they could be open to legal action may be a barrier for firms who would otherwise donate their surplus. The Welsh Government should support ongoing work by WRAP and the Food Standards Agency aimed at clarifying existing legal protections.
- **The Community Food Strategy** has been a good start however we feel that it could be strengthened through greater recognition, consideration and

¹² [Community Food Map for Wales | FareShare Cymru](#)

engagement of more of the community food sector as the work that we, our members and our food partners do strengthens community food resilience and works towards creating cohesive communities. The role of food redistribution could also be strengthened within that strategy. In addition to this some actions are yet to take place including, as far as we are aware the setting up of the advisory committee.

- Work towards a more **joined up approach on food across government** - we know that food and our work impacts on so many different departments and we and the work we do could benefit with greater involvement/ collaboration across more areas.
- Lay out **targets** that are directly related to poverty and nutrition

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