



Addressing food insecurity in Mansbridge through the food pantry model

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Research question: What are the barriers to accessing food pantries for Mansbridge residents?



BACKGROUND

- Food insecurity is a major issue in Southampton. This project offers an opportunity to gather insights directly from local residents at single community provider to help identify barriers that may be preventing people accessing and benefiting from the support the Pantry offers.
- The Abri Roundabout Café pantry is open 8am – 2pm, Mon.-Fri. Food deliveries arrive on Monday mornings.
- As a volunteer at the café and a member of the Pantry I noticed a gap between the 1,052 households on Mansbridge Estate and the small number of residents using the pantry – 360 members with around 85 attending regularly.
Why is the use so low?

Somewhere without steps and parking access would be great

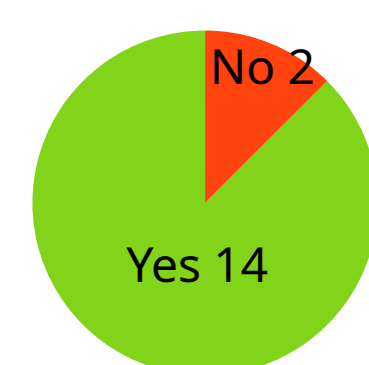
I wasn't aware of a community pantry so close by

We all work!

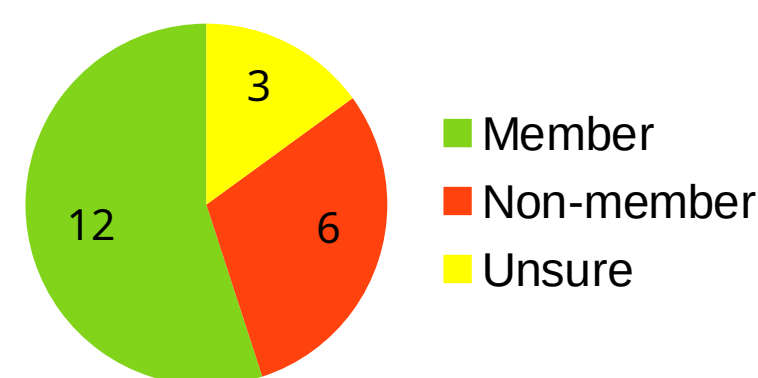
The pantry makes life a wee bit more affordable

Its becoming incredibly expensive to eat!

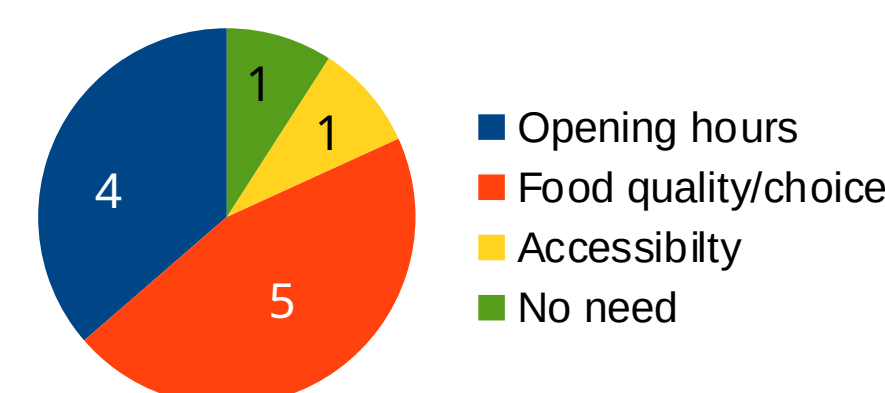
FINDINGS



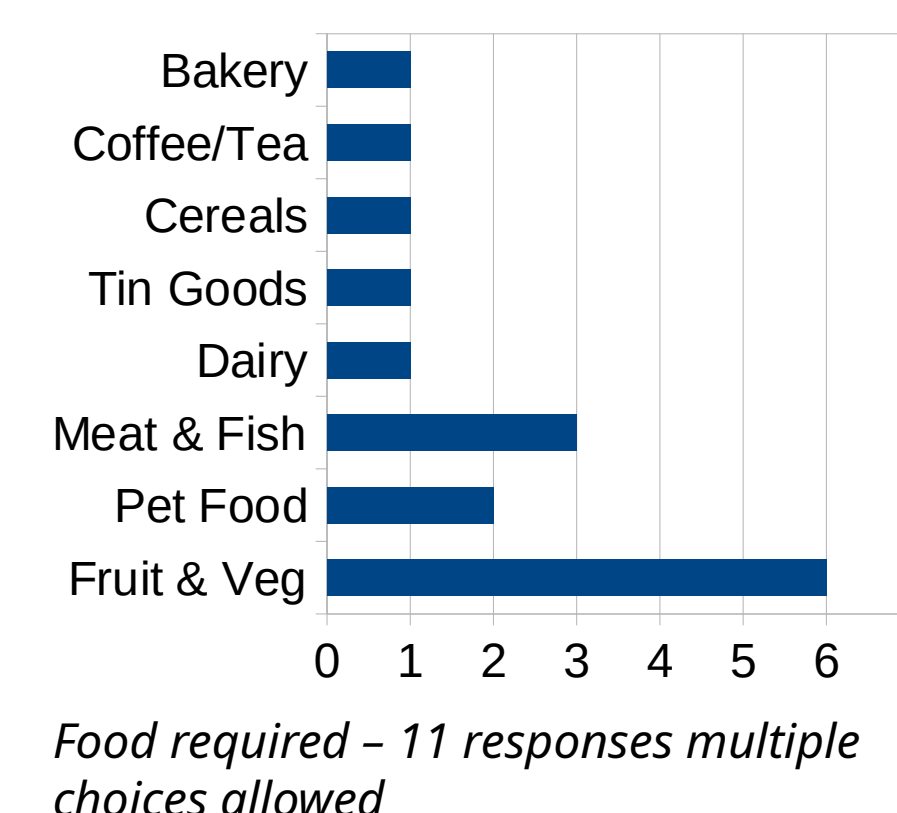
Would you benefit from using the pantry? 16 responses



Are you a pantry member? 21 responses



Reasons for not using the pantry 10 responses, multiple reasons allowed



Food required – 11 responses multiple choices allowed

CONCLUSION

Strengths & Weaknesses

- As a local resident my connection to the community helped build trust with the participants making them more open and willing to share valuable, authentic information that strengthened my findings.
- The short time frame and reliance on a limited number paper and QR code questionnaires impacted the depth of information gathered. Many residents felt intimidated by the survey format. Using interviews, supported by my local knowledge, would have produced richer insights. Several people were happy to talk informally but refused to complete the questionnaire.
- The questionnaire and interviews were restricted to visitors to the Pantry/Café so the results are not necessarily representative of the entire Mansbridge estate.
- Time and resources allowing a “letter drop” across the entire estate would have both produced more comprehensive data as well as raising awareness of the pantry.

Summary

- Food insecurity is a real issue and although food pantries offer a dignified way to improve access to nutritious food our research shows that the range and quality of the food on offer combined with restricted opening hours are barriers to residents. Opening hours in particular impacts working families.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests these problems are compounded by the limited availability of fresh food throughout the week with mainly dried, tinned or frozen items left after the weekly delivery day.
- To progress this research, a more comprehensive study of the Mansbridge estate is required incorporating all residents' perspectives through letter drops, interviews and focus groups, leading toward practical recommendations as to how the Pantry could better meet the needs of the wider community.

METHOD

Secondary (desk) research

I reviewed research from the UK, USA and Canada on food insecurity and barriers to pantry use and was encouraged to find evidence supporting my initial question regarding low uptake. These reports informed the design of my questionnaire and gave me the confidence and background knowledge to effectively lead a focus group.

Primary research

- Paper questionnaires and QR Code based online surveys. 21 responses were collected.
- A focus group with three participants.
- Personal approaches to Café and pantry clients
- Anecdotal insights from residents who preferred not to complete a questionnaire

THANKS

- Mansbridge residents for completing questionnaires and participating in the focus group
- The volunteer staff at the Abri Roundabout Café who made the project possible

REFERENCES

- Trussell (2025) Hunger in the UK: wave 2. Salisbury: Trussell
- Trussell (2025) Together for change: Ending Hunger Together (2025-2030)
- University of Sheffield food ladders framework moving beyond food banks 2024
- Feeding Britain (2024) Affordable food clubs. Impact report (April 2024)