

The impact of Your Local Pantry membership on food insecurity and diet quality

A national quasi-experimental evaluation of the community food club model

Principal investigator: Rachel Loopstra

Contributors: S. G. Ganbavale, T. van Rens, B. Savory, O. Huse, S. Cummins



The objective

Community food shops, like the Your Local Pantry model, aim to reduce food insecurity while maintaining client dignity. The evaluation sought to determine whether membership in a community food club resulted in lower food insecurity and higher dietary quality compared to non-membership.



The intervention

Your Local Pantry (YLP) aims to provide a dignified alternative to traditional emergency food aid:

Community food club model: Members are able to access a retail shop-like environment, where they can choose their own food and non-food essential items in exchange for a low-cost fee (£3.5 to £7).

Economic benefit: On average, members save £27 per week on their groceries compared to standard supermarket prices.

Scale: YLP has operated as a national network since 2017 and currently serves approximately 12,500 member households across the UK.

Study setting & methodology

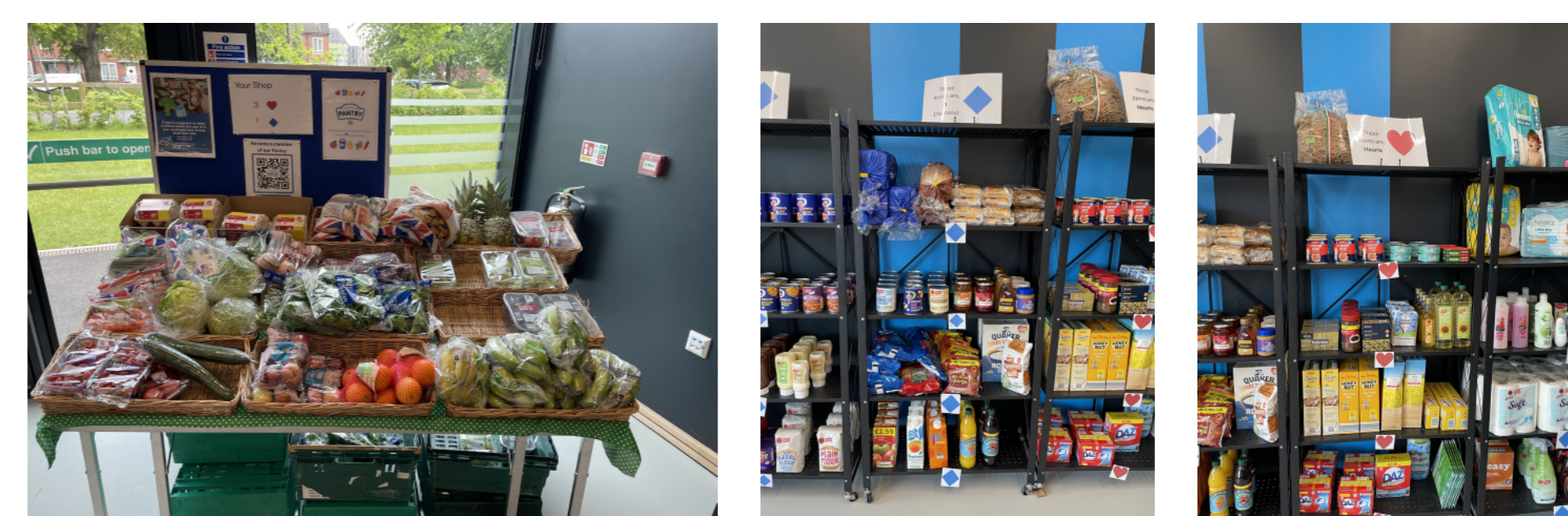
- **Location:** 76 YLP franchises across England.
- **Target population:** Adult applicants from households newly applying for YLP membership.
- **Design:** A quasi-experimental study comparing people who applied and had to wait for a membership with those who applied and were granted a membership over the course of the study (assuming "as-if random" allocation).
- **Data sources:** Primary and secondary outcomes were measured via questionnaires.
- **Timeframe:** The measurement was conducted over 10 weeks. Fieldwork took place over February to October 2025.

Key findings

Membership was associated with an immediate significant reduction in food insecurity, particularly severe food insecurity. Immediate improvement in diet was not evident, but diets improved with duration of membership.

Outcome measure	Result (Intervention effect)
Primary: Moderate/severe food insecurity	14 percentage point reduction compared to non-members
Primary: Severe food insecurity	18 percentage point reduction compared to non-members
Secondary: Dietary quality	No significant change with conversion to membership, but significant improvement with duration of membership.

These images illustrate examples of food items (fresh fruits and vegetables, eggs, staple foods, baby foods) and non-food essential items (cleaning products, bathing products) that YLP members can get in exchange for a low-cost membership fee.



Scientific & policy implications

Robust evidence: As the first large-scale national evaluation using a robust quasi-experimental design, this work builds on existing pre-post study designs. It confirms that community food clubs reduce food insecurity while meeting the growing interest in models that provide greater dignity than traditional food banks.

Reduction in food insecurity: YLP membership is associated with a significant 14 percentage point reduction in moderate or severe food insecurity, and 18 percentage point reduction in severe food insecurity.

Preferred form of food support: Qualitative interviews among new members carried out by the process evaluation team highlighted how members liked being able to choose their own foods in a shop-like environment. The paid membership fee was not seen as a barrier, but instead was welcomed as it was perceived to increase the quality and variety of products and reduce the stigma associated with receiving charity.

The "exposure" threshold for health: While short-term membership showed no immediate impact on diet, dietary gains emerged with duration of membership. This indicates that longer exposure may be required to translate into improved nutritional and health outcomes.

Generalisability and representative data: Although the study was limited to a 10-week period and participants who opted in, it provides an essential baseline for a model currently serving 13,000 households.

Scan the QR code to read more

