More than meals: Making a difference with FareShare food

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At NatCen Social Research we believe that social research has the power to make life better. By really understanding the complexity of people’s lives and what they think about the issues that affect them, we give the public a powerful and influential role in shaping decisions and services that can make a difference to everyone. And as an independent, not for profit organisation we’re able to put all our time and energy into delivering social research that works for society.

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Executive Summary

Introduction

FareShare redistributes food from retailers, manufacturers and producers that would otherwise go to waste to almost 2,500 local charities and community groups (Community Food Members, or CFMs) across the UK. These organisations transform this food into nutritious meals for over 211,000 vulnerable people each week.¹ By saving edible food from being wasted and redirecting it to charities and community groups, FareShare’s work has the dual effect of reducing food waste and tackling hunger and food poverty.

This report presents findings from a survey of 1,028 individual CFM clients from across the UK, providing independent evidence on the direct impact of the work of FareShare on the lives of those who receive the food FareShare redistributes.

The majority of FareShare’s CFM clients get their main meal of the day from the CFM

More than half of clients said they regularly ate their main meal of the day at the CFM

57%

In addition to CFM clients regularly eating their main meal of the day at the service, 56% say that food is their main reason for visiting the CFM. The majority of clients say they find it hard to cook a meal for themselves or their family. The affordability of food prevents a third of clients from cooking a meal.

CFM clients value the quality of the food provided. 93% think the food is good and 27% say that the quality is the main reason they access their food through the CFM.

Clients eat more fruit, vegetables, meat, bread and cereals since accessing the CFM

59% 46% 46%

¹ Figures based on 2015/2016 year end data.
A key benefit of FareShare providing food to people through CFMs is that clients are able to have a more nutritious and balanced diet. 59% of CFM clients say they eat more fruit and vegetables since accessing the CFM. Just under half say they eat more meat, bread and cereals.

81% of clients also say that attending the CFM has increased the number of hot meals they eat.

The majority of clients say that eating at the CFM has a positive impact on both their physical and mental wellbeing

52% say that their physical strength has increased since getting food at the CFM and 52% say that their energy levels have increased. In addition to these improvements in clients’ physical health due to getting food from the CFM, there are also a number of beneficial psychological effects. 87% say that eating a meal at the service has a positive impact on how they feel and 92% say that being able to have a meal at the service helps them ‘face the day ahead’.

Food provided to FareShare CFMs also has social benefits

82% say that eating a meal at the CFM makes them feel part of a community

Food provided by CFMs has had a range of wider benefits for clients. 82% say it makes them feel part of a community and 29% say that what they enjoy most about eating at the CFM is socialising.

Accessing food through CFMs allows people to eat together as a family. 35% of clients visit the CFM with their children and the vast majority of them think it is important to be able to eat together.
The majority of clients say they are able to save money as a result of getting food from a CFM and are using these savings for a wide range of purposes, including paying bills and rent, visiting family and treating children.

Many of the clients of CFMs have difficulties accessing food: 39% say they are regularly unable to buy food and a quarter say they have gone several days without a proper meal in the last year. The majority of clients say they find it hard to cook a meal for themselves or their family and the affordability of food prevents a third of clients from cooking a meal.

**Conclusions**

FareShare food is making a huge difference to the lives of CFM clients. Not only does the food help to fulfill their dietary and nutritional needs but it also improves their physical and mental wellbeing and allows them to save money. FareShare’s food provision means that many clients are able to get their main meal of the day at the CFM, and that they have a more nutritious and balanced diet. Clients’ physical strength is improved, they feel more able to face the day ahead and they value the opportunity to feel part of a community, meet friends and socialise. In particular clients who are able to sit down and have a hot meal at a CFM are more likely to say that eating at the CFM has a positive impact on how they feel. Most clients also save money by eating at the CFM allowing them to pay for essentials as well as participating more in society. The money that is freed up for CFMs through FareShare food means they are able to give more clients access to a wide range of other essential services. Many clients are regularly unable to buy food, with nearly half saying they have gone without a proper meal in the last month. The affordability of food is the most common reason why clients find it hard to cook a meal. Increasing the level of food provision to charities and community groups across the UK would provide a wide and varied set of benefits to even more of the most vulnerable in society.