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BANSTEAD PANTRY IMPACT REPORT



AFTER 6 MONTHS



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Banstead Pantry is a welcoming community hub built around food, offering affordable and healthy food, access to information and support, and opportunities to volunteer and learn new skills. Opening in Autumn 2024, it supports 129 active members from Banstead Village and surrounding areas. A recent survey of 63 members (49% response rate) assesses the early impact of the Pantry.

The vast majority of members live locally, often in rented or social housing, and many are facing significant financial hardship: 70% say they are struggling to manage financially, and food insecurity is widespread—60% are skipping meals and 25% have recently gone whole days without food. These figures far exceed national averages, highlighting the Pantry's success in reaching those most in need.

I used to spend quite a lot on shopping, and my debt was just increasing more and more. Now I am so much more in control and eating better, as I can afford better options with the pantry. Thank you so much!

Members also appreciate the warm and welcoming environment and sense of community, with all respondents describing staff and volunteers as helpful and supportive.

I went to an energy workshop it was so helpful. I received a shopping voucher and got an air fryer, and managed to make my bills cheaper.

It has meant we can afford presents for our children on birthdays/Christmas. We have also been able to have some more special days out as a family and made lovely memories. The Pantry really has made such a difference, and I am so grateful."

Despite these challenges, member feedback is overwhelmingly positive. The core food offering is highly valued, with 99% saying it offers good value and 97% agreeing that it offers a good supply of healthy and affordable food.

I am extremely grateful to the friendly, helpful staff at the pantry. It has helped my depression to know that people care.

The Pantry has also reduced local Foodbank use by more than half among members who previously relied on it. These early findings suggest Banstead Pantry is on a promising path to replicating the long-term success seen at Epsom Pantry.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In terms of impact, the Pantry is already delivering against its core outcomes:

1.

Increasing financial
resilience

68% of members say they now feel more control over their finances, suggesting that the Pantry is not only easing immediate pressure but also contributing to longer-term financial confidence and stability. 81% say the savings made help them afford basic essentials, and 60% say it has helped pay off debt or has stopped them getting into debt.

2.

Reducing food
insecurity

90% of members said they were now less anxious about feeding themselves and their family, and 84% agreed that the Pantry has given them more choice over the food they buy. More than two-thirds of members are eating more fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, and meat.

3.

Building
community

For many members, the Pantry has become an important part of their social life and community. 76% have met new people and feel less isolated, 72% feel more connected to the local community, and 80% feel their views about the Pantry are listened to.

4.

Learning and
sharing new skills

The Pantry is already helping people learn and share new skills as well as connect with other local sources of support. 59% of members feel better informed about where to get help, and 40% are more engaged with other agencies. 41% have participated in community activities, and there is a strong demand for more activities like this.



BACKGROUND

Banstead Pantry opened in Autumn 2024 and currently supports 129 active members from Banstead Village and surrounding areas. After around six months of operation, we carried out a survey to find out about members' early experiences with the Pantry. About a third of respondents joined at least six months ago, and two-thirds have joined between 3-6 months ago (40%) or within the past three months (24%).

All members visiting the Pantry over a four-week period in May were invited to complete the survey, and we received 63 responses – a response rate of 49%. The questionnaire is similar to the one we used to evaluate the impact of our other Pantry in Epsom, allowing us to make comparisons between the two locations.

EVALUATION AIMS

Banstead Pantry seeks to be a welcoming community hub built around food, offering affordable and healthy food, access to information and support, and opportunities for volunteering and learning new skills.

The impact survey was designed to monitor progress against four core outcomes:

1.

Increasing financial
resilience

2.

Reducing food
insecurity

3.

Building
community

4.

Learning and
sharing new skills



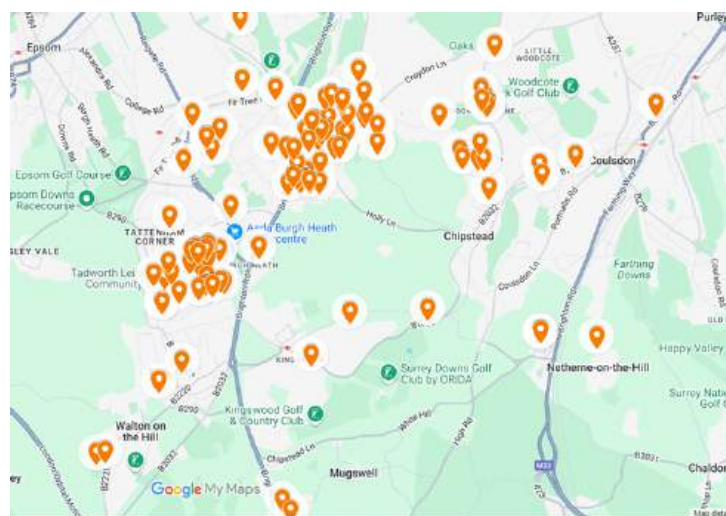
CHARACTERISTICS OF PANTRY MEMBERS

Around half of the members are currently employed – 27% full-time, 21% part-time, and 2% self-employed. Among those not in paid work, 44% have a long-term illness or disability, 28% are stay-at-home parents, 23% are retired, and 13% are carers.

50%

The vast majority of members (85%) live in Reigate & Banstead, with the highest numbers coming from **Banstead Village ward (34% of members)**, where the Pantry is based, and **Tattenham Corner & Preston ward (21%)**, home to one of our nearby Foodbank centres – see map opposite.

Two-thirds of Pantry members are living in rented accommodation – **44% in social housing and 24% in private rentals**. This is more than twice the rate across the whole borough (27%). Less than a quarter of members own their own homes, compared to 71% of all households locally.



Banstead Pantry members and their households span a wide age range. Whilst they include a disproportionate number of children compared with the local borough (28% vs 20%), this is representative of the population living in poverty across the UK – see Table below.

AGE BAND	PANTRY MEMBERS	LOCAL POPULATION (1)	UK HOUSEHOLDS IN POVERTY (2)
Under 16	28%	20%	31%
16-24	14%	9%	55%
25 - 64	48%	54%	
65 and over	10%	18%	13%

(1) Based on local authority population estimates for Reigate & Banstead

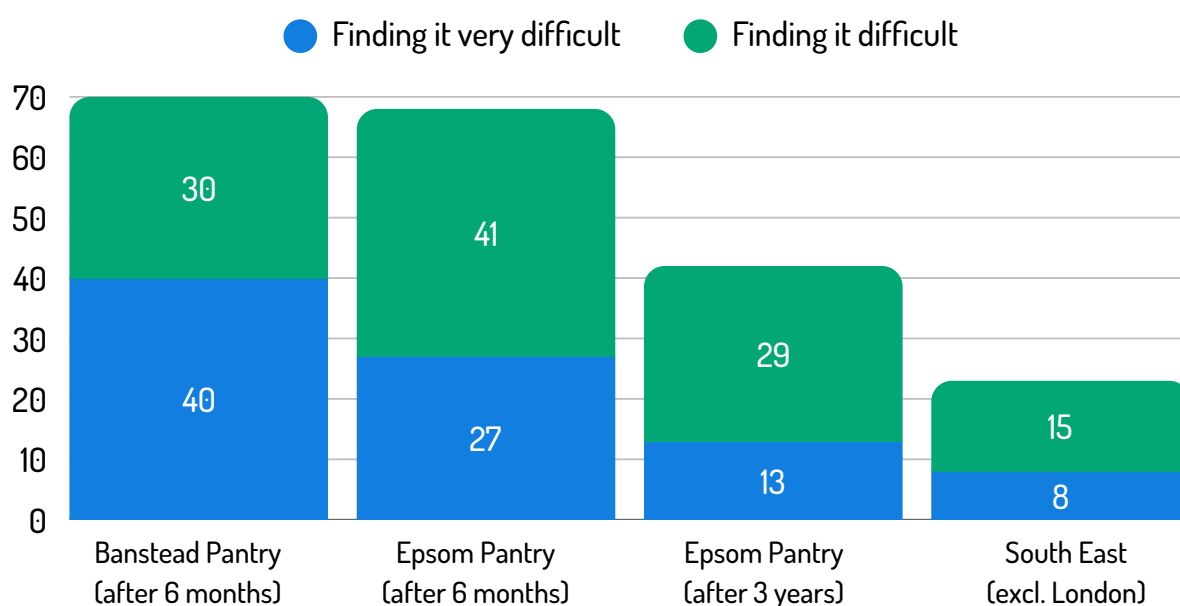
(2) Taken from the latest Households Below Average Income (HBAI) statistics for 2023/24.

PANTRY MEMBERS' FINANCIAL SITUATION

When asked how they were coping financially at the moment, **seven in ten members report they are struggling financially; 40% are finding it "very difficult" to manage financially; 30% are finding it "difficult"**. This is significantly higher than both regional and national averages, showing that the Pantry is successfully reaching those in greatest need.

These figures are in line with those reported by Epsom Pantry members shortly after joining (when 68% were finding it difficult or very difficult to manage financially). Encouragingly, **Epsom members have seen a marked improvement in their financial circumstances over the past two and a half years**, offering hope for similar progress in Banstead as the benefits of Pantry membership take effect over time – see Chart 1 below.

Chart 1: Which best describes how well you are coping financially at the moment....?



Levels of food insecurity among Banstead members are also alarmingly high:

91%

are eating less healthily, because they can't afford a balanced diet.

60%

are skipping meals or reducing meal portions.

83%

of respondents say they worry about running out of food.

25%

have gone for a whole day without food in the last three months.

These rates are far higher than in the general population. For example, the latest Food Foundation tracker poll (February 2025) found that 13% of UK adults had skipped meals and 5% had gone a whole day without eating in the previous month.

MEMBERS' EXPERIENCES OF USING THE PANTRY

Feedback shows that members have had overwhelmingly positive experiences at Banstead Pantry. All or nearly all respondents agreed – and most strongly agreed – that the Pantry is a warm and welcoming place and that the staff and volunteers are helpful and supportive.

The Pantry's core offer is rated very highly:

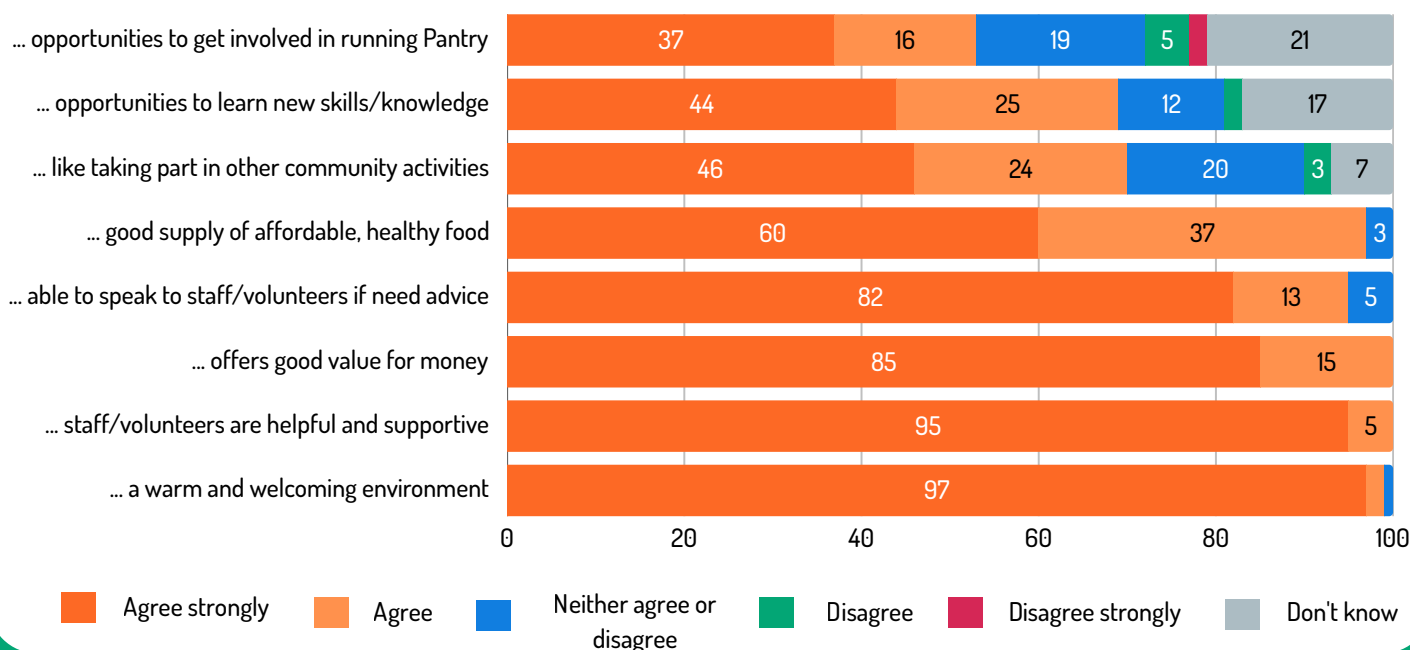
- 99% say that the Pantry offers good value for money.
- 97% agree it offers a good supply of affordable, healthy food.

Members are also starting to engage with the broader community offer:

- 70% say they like taking part in community activities.
- 69% have been offered opportunities to learn new skills.
- 53% feel they have been able to get involved in running the Pantry.

Based on our experience with Epsom Pantry, we expect these **engagement levels to grow over time**, as more members take part in the workshops and community activities on offer at the Pantry.

Chart 2: Do you agree or disagree with these statements about your experience of coming to the Pantry...?



When asked what they value most about the Pantry, three key themes stand out:

Sense of community and belonging

For many, the Pantry is more than a place to shop; it's a place to connect, helping to reduce social isolation.

Friendly, non-judgemental environment

Many praised the kindness of the staff and volunteers, describing the Pantry as a safe space where they feel comfortable asking for help.

Access to healthy, affordable food

Members value the regular supply of nutritious food at low prices, helping ease the financial stress on stretched household budgets.

My two friends use the pantry as a catch up for a lovely chat (with tea). Very friendly and helpful staff that make us feel welcome. And great food which really helps - especially fruit and veg, which I rarely buy. I have started eating oranges again, because of the Pantry.

It is a friendly, happy environment, where I do not feel embarrassed for needing help.

I would not be able to feed me and my kids healthily some weeks. The staff go above and beyond for me... I have been through difficulties this year and the staff have listened and helped.

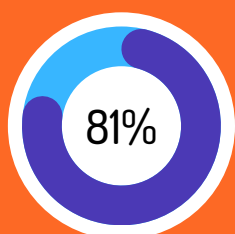


IMPACT OF THE PANTRY

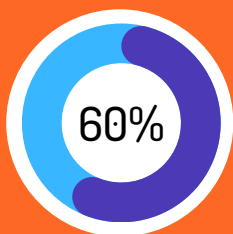
1. INCREASING FINANCIAL RESILIENCE

Most members (89%) visit the Pantry every week or most weeks – and, on average, save between £30-35 per shop, which is worth around £1,500 a year. These savings can be redirected towards essential living costs, like housing, utilities, and debt repayments, or used to build up a small savings pot to protect against future shocks:

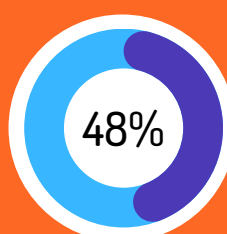
How has the money saved from coming to the Pantry helped you...?



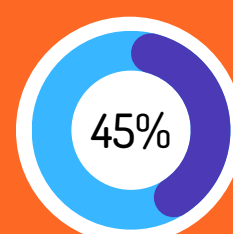
...able to afford the basic essentials



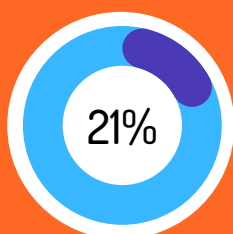
... pay off debt/stop getting in debt



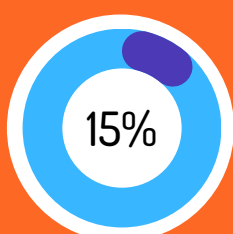
... buy a greater variety of food



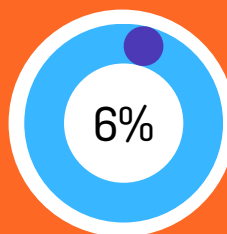
... buy healthier food



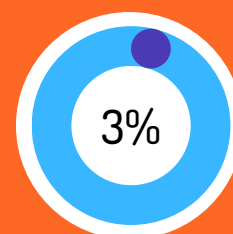
... pay for children's activities



... save money for the future



... pay for a fun trip or holiday



... pay for training or education

I used to spend quite a lot on shopping, and my debt was just increasing more and more. Now I am so much more in control and eating better, as I can afford better options with the pantry. Thank you so much!

In addition, 52% say their financial situation has got a little better since joining, and 8% say it has improved a lot. 68% of members also say they now feel more control over their finances, suggesting that the Pantry is not only easing immediate pressure but also contributing to longer-term financial confidence and stability.

2. REDUCING FOOD INSECURITY

Access to affordable food is at the heart of what the Pantry offers, and the impact is clear:

- 90% of members say they are now less anxious about feeding their family.
- 84% feel they have more choice over the food they buy.
- 72% of members say they are cooking more and/or trying new recipes.

Members are also adopting a healthier and more varied diet, **with more than two-thirds eating more fresh fruit, vegetables, fish, and meat.** At the same time, two-thirds of members say they are trying new things they've not had before, and **over half of members say they are eating fewer processed meals.**

69%

eating more
fresh fruit &
vegetables

68%

eating more
fish, meat
& eggs

68%

bought new
things they've
not tried before

61%

eating less
ready meals or
processed foods

It has improved my diet. I eat more fruit and veg. I like my fresh chicken mid-week. Lasts me two days which helps a lot!

It has made a huge difference. As a carer, my financial situation has changed considerably. Without the help that the pantry provides, I would not have been able to put my heating on at all over the winter. I am also not skipping as many meals."

Impact on the use of the Foodbank

One of the goals of the Pantry is to provide an affordable and dignified alternative to the Foodbank. Out of the 129 active Pantry members at the time, 52 (or 40%) had previously used the Foodbank, and 23 of them have visited in the six months before and/or after the Pantry opened.

Those members used the Foodbank 23 times in the first six months of 2025, after the Pantry was launched. That's a big drop compared to the same period in 2024, when they visited 57 times. In other words, their use of the Foodbank has more than halved since joining the Pantry. This has helped reduce overall demand for the nearby Foodbank centres in Banstead and Tadworth by around 9%.

3. BUILDING COMMUNITY

At Banstead Pantry, people are welcomed as members – not just customers – which is designed to create a strong sense of belonging. Regular shopping sessions and community activities offer members the chance to connect with others and build relationships. Our survey found that:

- 76% say they have met new people and feel less isolated.
- 72% feel more connected to the local community.
- 80% feel their views about the Pantry are listened to.

While these figures are slightly lower than for Epsom Pantry (now in its fourth year), they closely match the results from Epsom's first survey at the six-month mark, suggesting that Banstead Pantry is on the same positive trajectory as its more established counterpart.

4. LEARNING AND SHARING SKILLS

An important role of the Pantry model, as it develops, is to offer members the opportunity to take part in workshops and other community activities that help members build skills, boost confidence, and feel more connected. Though it's still very early days, the survey shows this is beginning to make a difference:

- 41% of members have taken part in one or more community activities, such as energy workshops (30%) or cooking workshops (17%).
- 40% say they have learnt new skills or knowledge.
- 67% feel more confident since joining the Pantry.

There is an appetite for more activities like this, particularly drop-in advice (52%), financial well-being workshops (45%), and cooking or art workshops (41%). Activities that focus on building financial resilience are especially in demand at Banstead Pantry, which may reflect the greater financial challenges facing its members compared to Epsom Pantry.



In addition, 59% of members feel better informed about where to get help, and 40% are more engaged with other agencies. This shows that the Pantry is already helping people discover and connect with other local sources of support.



CONCLUSION

In its first six months, Banstead Pantry is already having a strong positive impact on members' lives. Almost all rate it as welcoming, supportive, and offering good value, healthy food. Members save £30–35 per shop, helping them pay for essentials, manage debts, and take control of their finances. Food insecurity among members is alarmingly high, but the Pantry means they can now afford a healthier diet, and has halved foodbank visits among former users. The Pantry is also fostering community, with over 70% feeling less isolated and many starting to join workshops, build skills, and gain confidence. These results suggest Banstead Pantry, like its predecessor in Epsom, is on track to lasting, transformative change.

MARY'S STORY

Mary found Banstead Pantry through her social prescriber, as she was struggling with anxiety and unable to work for a period of time. She had visited Banstead Foodbank before during times when money was extremely tight, and she ran out of food. Mary joined Banstead Pantry in January 2025. She is so grateful for the access to fresh fruit and vegetables, as well as the social aspect, and enjoys speaking to the volunteers and fellow members each week. Since joining the Pantry Mary has now found a new job and is eager to start working for the first time in years. She gained renewed confidence from visiting the Pantry and receiving support to improve her circumstances. Mary has booked on to our upcoming cooking workshop, where she and other members will receive an air fryer and learn how to cook energy-efficient meals with it, reducing food costs and energy bills. She has also referred a friend who she knows will benefit from the Pantry.



"I told her it is so helpful and not scary at all, shopping at the Pantry makes such a difference."

THANK YOU

Banstead Pantry received overwhelming support from our community in our first 6 months of opening. We are grateful for the generosity that makes our work possible.

We are especially thankful to:

Raven Housing Association
Reigate and Banstead Borough Council

We would also like to thank our dedicated volunteers who are so committed to our vision of a poverty-free future for our community. Your caring and supportive presence in the Pantry has created a welcoming environment for all our members and their families.

With a special thank you to our Pantry members. You have created a community that uplifts one another and is open to all. Thank you for sharing your experiences with us.



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