



University of Essex



The Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex Programme: A “Social Return on Investment” Approach on Sustainable Community Assets for Social Support and Care

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Foreword

Working with a broad range of place-based voluntary, community and faith-based organisations across the County, Essex County Council is establishing a network of affordable food programmes that will take the form of a Community Supermarket or Pantry in every district, borough, and city in Essex by the summer of 2024.

With nine programmes already established, these community led food initiatives hold the space between the crisis intervention of Food Banks, and affordable supermarkets. Delivered by the community, for the community, these not-for-profit programmes provide reliable, regular access to affordable food and household items from a fixed community location or through a mobile pack-away or walk on model.

At the core of the Community Supermarket programme is the need to tackle food insecurity and build financial resilience through a dignified shopping experience where members retain choice and control about how they spend their limited money. With no means testing, the model supports individuals who are moving out of crisis, as well as offering anybody who is feeling the impact of financial difficulty, the opportunity to shop for items that will feed them and their families at lower cost.

A key element of the Council's ambitions to Level Up Essex and tackle place-based inequality, the model is built around a community shop feel that allows members to browse, pick out items of fresh fruit and vegetables, chilled milk, cheese and yoghurt, frozen and ambient food, as well as day to day essentials such as washing powder, shampoo, deodorant, and sanitary products. Based on development of a diverse supply chain the community supermarkets can offer a basket of goods at between 30% and 40% less than the same items in more traditional supermarket.

Modelled on programmes that have been established in the North of England for many years, ECC has partnered with national experts Feeding Britain to realise the potential of the network as the start of a conversation with shoppers who can then be supported by coffee mornings and opportunities to tackle social isolation and loneliness, as well as wrap around services including Citizens Advice, Credit Union, Community Banking and Adult Education.

Over the last eighteen months the network has signed up over 1900 members supporting over 7,000 individuals to access food to cook for themselves and their families. At the time of writing, an ECC investment of £304,000 to date has leveraged an additional £436,000 in funding from partners, through collaboration with District, Borough, and City colleagues as well as local charities to extend the original plans and sustain this much needed programme to tackle the devastating impact of food insecurity on communities.

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Meet the Community Supermarkets

Brooklands Community Shop, Jaywick

The Brooklands Community Shop originally opened 1 day a week in the Jaywick Community Resource Centre and in January 2023 moved to a new, permanent shop space across the road, allowing it to open multiple days per week. It provides a service to local members of the community so they can have access to essential food and other items, from fresh and frozen food and vegetables to household items and cleaning products. Their aim is to carry on their journey in keeping their service available for all local residents, offering a safe and welcoming community space. They will soon have a small café area, where shoppers and residents can get a hot drink and socialise, or just pop in for a chat.

The Hope Community Supermarket, Laindon

The Hope Community Supermarket opened in November 2022 at the Laindon Community Centre. It aspires to offer a regular shopping experience for Basildon residents. It offers a wide selection of essential basket items including fresh, frozen, cupboard and hygiene products. Shoppers can spend time to do their weekly shopping, spend time with other customers or volunteers over tea, coffee and refreshments that are provided during their opening hours every Friday in the main sports hall of the Laindon Community Centre. Moreover, shoppers can get helpful advice from organisations that visit their premises such as The Table, Citizens Advice and more. The Hope Community Supermarket has recently opened a second hub at the Trinity Methodist Church, in Vange, operating every Tuesday.

Summary

This is a Social Return on Investment (SROI) report of the first stage of the “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” programme focusing on the social impact of the two first Community Supermarkets in Essex, in Laindon and Jaywick. The report demonstrates that the Hope Community Supermarket (Laindon) and the Brooklands Community Shop (Jaywick) have a positive impact on the lives of local residents and the local community, volunteers and staff.

Specifically, the report shows that for every £1 invested in the Community Supermarkets in Essex, there is a social return of £ 15,77.

This analysis was completed by a research team from the University of Essex, conducting research at the two Community Supermarkets between May and December 2023, during the first year of their operation. Qualitative and quantitative data from shoppers, volunteers and staff were collected and used to understand the change experienced by each stakeholder group and account for the social value of the change created.

‘It makes the cost of living a bit easier (...) what you save here you can put towards others or put back a bit of money, keep it aside. It helps you save a little bit. And you feel like you are eating well’. (J002)

‘I come and I see people’s faces, see a lot of people and interact with people. Sometimes you come here and you make friends, you keep seeing each other and you see yourself outside and you say hello, friendships start’. (B010)

‘To be honest with you, I won’t go to food banks, my pride won’t let me, even though I needed to. I feel ridiculous, I can’t do it. So I knew there was a monetary value to it, which I feel more comfortable with (...) for someone like me, for me this is the biggest thing, I can go in there and pay my way, so I don’t feel embarrassed, I don’t feel like taking goodwill, I feel more comfortable’. (B004)

‘It’s probably one of the best things the council have done around here in a long while’. (J012)

Introduction

This report evaluates the social impact created by the implementation of the “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” programme through the work of the Hope Community Supermarket in Laindon (Basildon) and the Brooklands Community Shop in Jaywick (Tendring), the two first community supermarkets (CSMs hereafter) in Essex. The report focuses on the first year of their development and operation, that is, 2023-2024. Since the creation of the two CSMs, as part of Essex County Council’s “Everyone’s Essex” Levelling Up Agenda, the “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” programme has expanded across the county, aspiring to establish CSMs in each of the 12 districts. This report assesses the social value of the first stage of the project based on an evaluation of the Hope and Brookland CSMs, by primarily focusing on the experiences of change in the lives of the shoppers as an outcome of the CSMs’ activity. Our research and Social Return on Investment evaluation of the overall project highlights the social impact of the two CSMs and shows that, in only a year, they are already considered by residents as community assets that support and enhance the health and wellbeing of their local communities, as well as places where people have access to safe, sufficient, and quality food. As a result, the two CSMs are evolving to become key community connectors that facilitate social interactions, foster connections to wider social support services, and enhance community ties, addressing in this way various interconnected social and food security challenges.

Our analysis seeks to support ECC’s planning and developing of Food Security policies and interventions to promote sustainable and secure food systems in Essex able to tackle social exclusion and isolation, thus enhancing individual and community resilience.

Background of the Programme and Localities

Adopted in January 2022 as part of the Essex County Council “Everyone’s Essex” Levelling Up Agenda, “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” was in this early stage a £361,720 programme to establish six not-for-profit CSMs to make food accessible and affordable in some of the most deprived areas of Essex. Seeking to attract the interest of local voluntary and community sector organisations, the programme was supported and designed in partnership with Feeding Britain. The first phase of the project commenced in May 2022 with the publication of the Request for Tenders for two CSMs, one in Tendring and one in Basildon, with the ECC’s financial contribution secured for a period of 18 months. The procurement specification encompassed 6 main areas for the development of the first CSMs in Essex:

- to create a sustainable and evolving community asset;
- to provide access to a diverse, affordable range of fresh, frozen, chilled and ambient groceries and household items for shoppers;
- to become a safe space for individuals or groups of people to come together and support each other;
- to create opportunities for employment and skills development through community volunteering;
- to enhance local people involvement and active citizenship in the community;
- to promote awareness and contribute to the reduction of food waste.

These six principles are central to ECC's vision underpinning the "Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex" programme. As a result, successful CSMs are funded with the ambition of becoming assets that enable positive change in some of the most disadvantaged localities in Essex. In this sense, the successful projects had to demonstrate their capacity to become sustainable community-led initiatives to address a variety of issues linked to food security, wellbeing and mental health, and individual and community resilience. The Hope Community Supermarket in Laindon, Basildon, and the Brooklands Community Shop in Jaywick, Tendring, met the criteria of the procurement process, and started their activities in November and December 2022 respectively.

ECC's community supermarkets programme identified Basildon and Tendring as priority areas for the establishment of the first two sites based on the overlaying of the Levelling Up geographies and Working Families targets with the 2019 Indices of Multiple Deprivation (IMD, 2019). A recent study commissioned by the Food Foundation on food security at a local authority scale across the UK (Moretti, Whitworth, and Blake 2021a) identified that Basildon and Tendring are two areas in Essex with a high percentage of households that are struggling or are worried about food security. According to their modelling (Moretti, Whitworth, and Blake 2021b), in Basildon 6.5% of households are struggling with food insecurity (the percentage reaches 15.5% in the most deprived households) and 9.16% are worried about their food security (15.8% in the most deprived households). In Tendring 6.2% of households are struggling (16.98% in the most deprived households) and 11.17% are worried about their food security (18.18% in the most deprived households). Households that *struggle* have reduced food or skipped meals or they reported that they do not have access to shops or delivery services, or could not access food due to their health. Households that *worry* include those that may have reduced the quality of the food they buy, including cases that are at the margin of low or very low food security.

Within this context, in May 2023, Essex County Council commissioned the University of Essex to develop an evaluation of the "Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex" programme focusing on the operation and experiences of the CSMs in Laindon and Jaywick. The evaluation of the programme has revealed that the CSMs activities have direct outcomes in a number of social domains, including access to quality food, health and wellbeing, community building, and skills development. Our research and evaluation show that the CSMs, in only a year, have become crucial community assets. As we will demonstrate, they are fulfilling the main aim of the programme to increase food security by making quality food more affordable and accessible in localities where a big part of the population fluctuates above and below the line of financial security. In doing so, they are contributing to a variety of direct and indirect outcomes associated with individual and community wellbeing on material, personal and interpersonal, and social and community levels of support and care. This evaluation showcases that the expected positive impact of the broader "Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex" programme, which involves the opening of CSMs across all Essex districts, encompasses social, economic and environmental components.

The Context of Food Security

With the current restrictions on electricity prices, I am looking for cheap, small food options more regularly than I was, say, one year ago [...] With the cost of electricity rising [...] I became a user rather than a person who donated, which surprised the heck out of me but that is how my life had changed. (B011)

Food security is a pressing issue shaping the experience of millions of people in the UK and globally. According to the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), approximately 735 million people faced hunger in 2022, that is 122 million more than before the start of the Covid-19 pandemic (2023). The FAO uses the term 'food insecurity' to define a person's 'lack of regular access to enough safe and nutritious food for normal growth and development and an active and healthy life' (FAO 2024). The Food Insecurity Experience Scale measures the annual prevalence of food insecurity at a global level in more than 140 countries, ranging from 'severe food insecurity' (no food for a day or more), to 'moderate food insecurity' (forced to compromise quality, quantity and variety of food), and 'mild food insecurity' (potential uncertainty about the ability to obtain food) (FAO 2019, 3-6). The original FAO definition and scales seem to pay more emphasis on nutritional and physiological aspects, however for this report it is important to not lose sight of the equally important social and cultural components of food experience, that is, socially and culturally acceptable access to food.

It is in this sense that we can understand food security as a matter of access to food, rather than merely a matter of availability of food. The increase of food prices due to, and combined with, the various effects of multiple crises means that a big part of the global population are losing access to necessary food to maintain a healthy life. In other words, despite food availability, people that could eat this food are not able to afford it. Access to food intersects with class, income, health, ability, location, and physical environment (to mention only some of the factors) in ways that can further intensify marginalisation of already vulnerable and disadvantaged populations.

Since 2010, food insecurity has risen steadily in the UK, the world's fifth richest country. Contributing factors include welfare reforms, wage stagnation, the Covid-19 pandemic, and the cost-of-living crisis. Prices have risen for food, housing, and energy, which constitute the largest expenses for poorer households. In the two years to January 2024, food prices rose by nearly 25% (Francis-Devine et al., 2023). Within this context, increasing numbers of people are living in food insecurity (Food Foundation, 2023). According to the latest round of the food insecurity tracking survey for the Food Foundation (2024), 1 in 5 households are struggling to get enough to eat, equating to an estimated 8 million adults experiencing moderate or severe food insecurity in January 2024, whilst over 6 million tonnes of food is wasted by the food industry every year including primary production and imports (WWF 2022, 24). Definitions of food insecurity are similar to those of food poverty in stressing lack of access to a healthy diet. This is reflected in rising numbers accessing the largest foodbank network, Trussell Trust, which in 2022-2023 distributed nearly 3 million food parcels, an increase of 220% on 2017-2018 (The Trussell Trust, 2024). The poorest 20% of people in the UK need to allocate half their disposable income to a healthy diet, and consequently, as their diets are generally poorer in fruit, vegetables, oily fish, and fibre (Food Foundation, 2023; Goudie, 2023), such diet inequalities have significant impact on health and life expectancy.

The Simultaneous Problem of Food Waste

Alongside this growing problem of food insecurity, increasing attention is being paid to the vast quantities of food wasted along the commercial food system. The Waste Resources Action Programme estimates that the UK wastes nearly 4.3 million tonnes of food annually from inefficiencies in the food system, impacting on climate change and environmental degradation (WRAP, 2023a, 1). Food production consumes considerable land, energy, and water resources, and generates around a third of global greenhouse gas emissions from its production, transport, and waste. In this context, food surplus is food that would normally become waste but is still fit for human consumption. This food cannot be sold in the conventional retail markets due to factors such as having damaged or mislabelled packaging, or arising from expired promotions or excess stock. This food surplus has typically been disposed of through landfill, animal feed, composting, or anaerobic digestion. However, the most efficient use of this surplus is donation to projects supporting people experiencing food insecurity. Data shows that around 170,000 tonnes of surplus food were redistributed in 2022, up from 55,000 tonnes in 2019 (WRAP 2023b, 5). In spite of the benefits of redistributing surplus food for human consumption, redistribution is not always favoured by the food industry due to concerns over food safety and brand reputations.

How are These Issues Being Addressed in the UK?

This context of rising poverty and environmental concerns has seen the emergence of food aid projects. Reliance on food aid has increased in the UK since 2010, although food provided by such programmes relies on charity and does not always meet dietary requirements. Food aid initiatives are defined by Lambie-Mumford et al. (2014, 15) as ‘any type of aid giving activity which aims to provide relief from the symptoms of food insecurity and poverty’. This aid encompasses surplus food redistributors (such as FareShare), food banks (providing food to be cooked at home), soup runs, community fridges, and community kitchens (providing cooked meals). Food aid projects have grown dramatically in number in the UK. There are now at least 2,800 foodbanks, along with thousands of other projects. This food is provided without charge and derives from donations from the food industry or individuals. One well-known drawback of these models is the impact on the dignity of recipients accessing food through a ‘hand out’, positioning users as beneficiaries of charity (Purdam et al. 2016). These initiatives also supply food that relies on what is available for donation and may not meet users’ dietary needs. Against this background, increasing attention is being paid to CSMs as an alternative option for addressing food insecurity.

The Alternative Solution of Community Supermarkets

In contrast to other food aid projects of charity-based food provisioning, CSMs are an alternative, community asset approach to food security. Lambie-Mumford et al. (2014, IV) suggest that the term ‘Food aid’ is ‘an umbrella term encompassing a range of large-scale and small local activities aiming to help people meet food needs, often on a short-term basis during crisis or immediate difficulty; more broadly they contribute to relieving symptoms of household or individual-level food insecurity and poverty’. In this sense, we can see that food aid projects are usually seen as “Emergency Systems” that provide free food on a temporary or supplementary basis to address people urgent needs (Caruso 2019). Although food charity systems have taken more permanent character in the past decade, it is important to differentiate

between them and community food security asset projects. Sustain (2021, 1) characterises the latter as member-led or solidarity projects that play an intermediary role to support people before reaching an emergency situation offering a more affordable shopping option within the local community. These depart from existing charity models by offering a choice of food in a supermarket setting at discounts ranging between 30% and 60%. In positioning members as shoppers rather than as beneficiaries of charity, this model fills the gap between food aid and conventional supermarkets to meet the needs of people facing or being at risk of food insecurity.

Definitions vary, but to Berri and Toma (2023, 1) CSMs ‘provide high quality surplus food, usually not considered sellable in the mainstream market, to low-income consumers for substantially discounted prices’. Alongside food and groceries, social inclusion can be promoted through on-site cafes and support services. The EU Fusions project identified the benefits of CSMs as threefold: 1) Social (food security and inclusion); 2) Environmental (preventing food waste) and; 3) Economic (easing pressures on household budgets) (Schneider et al. 2015). In this sense, CSMs aim to provide a community approach to food security while simultaneously contributing to the reduction of food waste. However, challenges include policies prioritising waste reduction, regulatory requirements, competition for surplus, logistics, nutritional value, and funding.

CSMs are now common in mainland Europe, first emerging in France in the 1980s. The largest number are found in France (700) and Germany (640) due to strong local authority support and the presence of umbrella organisations (Schneider et al. 2015). The ANDES¹ organisation in France and Tafel² in Germany organise funding, procure large donations, provide infrastructure, share best practice, lobby, and provide training. In mainland Europe, funding comes from public authorities, sales, commercial sponsorship, and donation. Some national policies offer fiscal incentives to donating food companies. France has a particularly appealing inducement of 60% tax relief, alongside a 2016 law requiring that retailers redistribute edible food to charity organisations. The UK’s regulatory context differs from Europe with surplus food redistribution relying on voluntary action, and here CSMs have been a more recent innovation. The first, called Community Shop, opened in Goldthorpe in 2013 and developed into a chain of 14 shops mostly in the north of the UK. In the last decade, CSMs have grown considerably in the UK, including 100 in the Pantry network.

Community Supermarkets and Social Welfare: Community Assets to Address Food Security

Social welfare policy and interventions seek to reduce the vulnerability of people and communities and enhance social justice for the most disadvantaged. Addressing poverty as a multidimensional issue, successful interventions in the field of social welfare should be able to address both the causes and symptoms of poverty and social disadvantage. The “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” programme aspires to be an early intervention to tackle food poverty and enhance food security at the local level. The decision of ECC to implement this programme demonstrates the important role of the (local) state in addressing basic human needs such as access to food. Of course, this intervention cannot

¹ Association Nationale de Développement des Epiceries Solidaires

² Bundesverband Deutsche Tafel e.V.

address the various dimensions of poverty, or even food poverty, on its own. However, by adopting a community-based approach that impacts access to food, CSMs can be seen as important assets able to focus on three key elements of food security: (a) availability and reliability of food, (b) access to sufficient, safe, and quality food, which is (c) socially and culturally acceptable.

By selling food and essential non-food items (e.g. care and hygiene products) at highly discounted prices, CSMs constitute an intervention that is capable of dealing better with the context-dependent nuances and complexities of everyday food provisioning practices and experiences, and the challenges faced by disadvantaged groups. These might include sufficient income to purchase adequate food, anxiety related to transportation due to various circumstances (e.g. capability, mental and physical health, lack of transportation means, budget, etc.), stigma associated with charitable food aid (making it for many a socially and culturally unacceptable way to access food), and social isolation. Against this background, ECC's community supermarket programme seems to move away from an understanding of food security as an issue of personal responsibility. By emphasizing the community rather than the individual level, it is an encouraging welfare approach that, if supported further, can address some of the structural factors and inequalities that are embedded in the production, distribution and consumption of food. As we will show in our analysis, CSMs offer an effective intervention to improve access to quality and nutritious food, improve physical and mental health, and enhance social integration and community ties. This translates into higher individual and community resilience and better ability to cope and manage amidst multiple crises.

Impact, Social Return on Investment (SROI) and Data

The main inquiry of this report is to show how social value is created through the activities of the first two CSMs in Essex. As mentioned, we understand CSMs as community assets that open up more inclusive and collaborative ways to address food security challenges and meet people's real needs in the here and now. As they are part of a project designed by the ECC, we are addressing them as a form of public intervention in the field of social policy, and particularly as a strategic community-based approach to social welfare reform at the local/regional level. Accordingly, the aim of this report and the SROI analysis is to demonstrate: (a) the positive impact of CSMs on the economic, social and mental wellbeing of individuals and their communities by offering access to quality food and essential non-food items, reducing demands on the household budget, enhancing community ties, and reducing the environmental impact of food waste by diverting food from landfills; (b) the legitimacy and effectiveness of ECC's "Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex" intervention in addressing pressing social needs and experiences of food security.

Impact and value are terms used widely in various fields of evaluation research and accounting, and commonly used in connection to the activities of third sector organisations, social innovation, policy and Corporate Social Responsibility. Recognising this diversity is important as it allows us to move beyond the usual financial interpretations of impact and value to address more socially meaningful aspects of community activities: community building, social use value, individual and community resilience, environmental value, etc. In thinking about the impact of programmes, policies or interventions it is important to take into account the resources invested (input) to set up a range of activities or services. In this sense, the activities or services are not considered to be ends in themselves, but rather are defined by the impact that interventions aspire to effectuate. However, impact can be defined both as the positive and/or negative changes in the experience of the relevant stakeholders or in the environment in relation to the performed activities or services provided. If the experience of change is positive then social value is created, if it is negative then social value is reduced. Impact and change can manifest across different dimensions (social, physical, psychological, cultural, economic, political) encompassing individual and/or collective aspects of experience.

SROI Methodology, Scope and Limitations

We draw on the Social Return on Investment Framework (SROI) that was developed by the New Economics Foundation (NEF), the Cabinet Office and Social Value UK to account for the outcomes and value created by the Hope and Brooklands CSMs as part of the "Bringing Community Supermarket to Essex" programme. This method enables organisations to capture the social value of their intervention in a more holistic way that is relevant to the people and other stakeholders experiencing or contributing to its transformative outcomes. It is in this sense that SROI is a people-led (or stakeholder-led) methodology, involving those who are experiencing change and making sure that recommendations are based on a thorough understanding and valuation of the lived impact that occurs from a project that goes beyond simple financial measurements, especially regarding tangible outcomes that are not usually included in evaluation or monitoring, yet are important to capture with regards to CSMs. As a result, SROI

tells a richer story about the impact of projects by measuring and valuing social, environmental and economic outcomes such as community building, social use value, individual and community resilience, and environmental value, and uses monetary values to represent them while placing the lived experiences of the key stakeholders at the centre of the evaluation and value identified.

Through SROI we develop a monetary valuation of social outcomes by assigning a “financial proxy” value that enables us to demonstrate a ratio of costs (investments) and benefits (social impact). Below we will carefully trace and explain the evidence base that informs the calculations of the various outcomes. As mentioned already, our SROI study has placed emphasis on stakeholders (mainly on shoppers, but also organisation leads and volunteers, and ECC project leads) who benefit directly from specific outcomes that can trigger certain impacts. To illustrate, the amount of money that has been invested in the CSMs has been used to provide services for shoppers in the supermarkets. These services have an impact on the life experience of the shoppers, for example on their mental wellbeing from reducing the burden on the household budget or on their social wellbeing from offering them opportunities to socialise with other members of the community. In identifying and quantifying such impact it is important to be cautious when one calculates the number of stakeholders that have experienced a change on the one hand, and the deadweight effect on the other, which accounts for results that could have been obtained independently of the activities of the CSMs.

In short, measuring the social value of the first stage of the project allows the Hope and Brooklands CSMs, as well as ECC, to demonstrate, to a greater extent, the impact that they are having, adding in the social outcomes usually ignored in traditional evaluation methods. Exploring these social changes for stakeholders through the SROI framework, and based on a conservative evaluation of the first year of the two CSMs comprising the SROI study, **the “Bringing Community Supermarket to Essex” has been shown to deliver a return to society of £15.77 for every £1 invested in the programme.**

However, as we show in this report, the SROI is about more than just the financial value of social impacts. SROI evaluation tells a story about the project, what the project does and how it benefits the community, and shows how the stakeholders are impacted and their lives are transformed.

Limitations

This report builds upon SROI principles and methods to highlight the impact of the “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” through an evaluation of the two first CSMs during the first year of their operation. Conducting the research during this early period, meant that several aspects of the CSMs services and activities have been in an incipient and formative stage. As a result, we need to note that certain baseline information was not available at the beginning of our research. For example, at the time of our data collection, CSMs did not have a standardised input of food surplus and were still developing networks with food providers. As a result, we decided that it was not possible to include this group of stakeholders in our research. Linked to the above, another stakeholder group that was not included in the evaluation of outcomes are smaller funders that contributed to the projects when data collection was already completed. Whilst we include such funding streams in the total capital invested in the CSMs, we were not able to engage such stakeholders in identifying potential outcomes for them in our value map. We

therefore acknowledge that such limitations have reduced the scope of our SROI analysis. A key learning point from this process is that for future SROI or other evaluations in coming years it will be important to keep detailed monitoring records of such aspects to enable a more extensive stakeholder engagement and segmentation.

Establishing Scope of Activities and Identifying Key Stakeholders

To understand and evaluate the social impact of the Hope and Brooklands CSMs we used a variety of data collection methods. Our research focused primarily on the shoppers. As explained above, this decision was made because data collection took place during the first months of the CSMs operation. As a result, the shoppers were identified as the stakeholder group that experiences a more direct benefit from the services and associated impacts of the CSMs at this incipient stage. Other stakeholders (volunteers, organisation leads, and local authority leads) were included to capture other groups who have a direct impact on, and also are impacted by, the work of the two CSMs in their first year of operation.

Stakeholders	How many in group in total?	Data Collection Methods	Number of Respondents
CSM Shoppers	1285	Semi-Structured Interviews, Surveys	25 interview participants 94 survey responses (100 sent out)
CSM Volunteers	34	Semi-Structured Interviews	3 interview participants
CSM Organisations/Staff	4	Semi-Structured Interviews, Observations, document analysis	4 interview participants
Essex County Council	2	Semi-Structured Interviews, document analysis	2 interview participants

A total of 34 semi-structured interviews and two waves of online surveys were conducted:

- 25 one-to-one and in person interviews with shoppers at the CSMs premises.
- 3 one-to-one and in person interviews with volunteers at the CSMs premises.
- Online survey of shoppers (carried out in May/June 2023).
- Online survey of shoppers (carried out in November/December 2023).
- 4 organisation leads were interviewed via zoom.
- 2 ECC project leads were interviewed via zoom.

Mapping Outcomes: Overview

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main method to explore and define outcomes for stakeholders. The possible outcomes were initially identified based on the priorities³ set by ECC of the project (see table below) and by referring to SROI reports for community supermarkets and food redistribution organisations (e.g. Grünhaus, Beeck & Shabal 2019; Saxena and Tornaghi 2018). The outcomes were further developed during consultation with local authority leads and CSM leads.

Outcome Stakeholders					
Programme Priorities	Outcomes	Shoppers	Volunteers	Staff	ECC
Create a sustainable and evolving community asset	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased community cohesion 	✓	✓	✓	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased sense of belonging 	✓	✓	✓	
Provide access to a diverse, affordable range of fresh, frozen, chilled and ambient groceries and household items for shoppers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved diet 	✓			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased financial comfort Able to heat house in winter 	✓			
Become a safe space for individuals or groups of people to come together and support each other	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Able to obtain advice locally 	✓			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced social isolation 	✓			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved mental health and wellbeing 	✓			
Create opportunities for employment and skills development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased Sense of purpose/ sense of doing something meaningful/ rewarding work 		✓	✓	✓

³ Regarding the food waste priority, in our interviews and surveys we have identified that there is an increased awareness on this issue for all stakeholders and that the CSMs contribute to the reduction of food waste by receiving food that otherwise would end up in the landfill. However, we are not able to provide a calculation of this outcome as the two CSMs are not yet collecting data about the weight of food surplus that they receive. This is something that we further address in our recommendations.

through community volunteering	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regular volunteering 		✓		
Enhance local people's involvement and active citizenship in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased personal integrity or agency 	✓			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased confidence 		✓		

This method allowed us to deductively develop a flexible guide of thematic questions that enabled stakeholders to share their experiences of change through their involvement with the CSMs. Additionally, online surveys were administered in two waves to produce standardised measures in relation to the identified outcomes, which in turn allowed us to populate the SROI indicators with more precision. The survey was designed for self-completion and to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. A total of 94 surveys were returned from the 100 that were sent out. Shoppers and volunteers were selected based on their willingness to participate in the research. Interviews and surveys were mainly conducted or arranged on the spot with the valuable support of a volunteer from each CSM and by the members of the research team. Another important source of data was operation data and output figures from the two CSMs and ECC. The interview and survey questions were designed based on the 'understand what changes' SROI principle to define experiences of changes in stakeholders' lives and determine final relevant outcomes.

Mapping Outcomes for Shoppers

Stakeholders	How many in group?	Outcome⁴	Impact⁵
Shoppers	1285 ⁶	Increased financial comfort	£1,504,201.73
		Able to heat house in winter	£148,308.41
		Increased personal integrity or agency	£625,910.76
		Improved diet	£165,224.64

⁴ Not all experienced all of these outcomes, check the full value map for further detail.

⁵ Each figure is based on HACT financial proxies, more detail can be seen in the value map.

⁶ We calculate the number of individuals who are shoppers only. This means that in this number we do not include the 34 volunteers who are also shoppers to avoid double-counting.

However, we can further dive into the benefits beyond access to food narrowly understood, but also as regards to affordable healthy and quality food. Shoppers reported that because of the CSMs they were able to reintroduce fresh fruit and vegetables in their diets. Especially with insights from the interview data we can further evidence that shoppers communicate an improved diet and appreciate that in CSMs they are able to access higher quality food items, also the availability and price of fruit is mentioned very often.

Next to an improved and healthier diet, we found further health and wellbeing benefits that were more unexpected. Respondents have shared the impact of CSMs on their daily routines. Several of them mentioned that before the opening of their local CSM, they had to plan trips to multiple supermarkets in order to get the best deals on items. This meant multiple trips either on foot or by bus, carrying around their grocery shopping, which was described as exhausting and burdensome especially for older adults or people with disabilities. The location of the two CSMs within the community make them easily accessible for all local residents. Similarly, the variety of food and other everyday items that the CSMs offer gives the opportunity to shoppers to do all or most of their grocery shopping in one place. This outcome is even more pronounced in Jaywick, where the closest supermarket is 4 miles away from Brooklands.

Whereas during the first round of data collection in the summer, the burdens of the cost-of-living crisis were consistently mentioned, in the second round during November, a significant number of shoppers mentioned in interviews that they have experienced times where they needed to make a decision on whether to eat properly or turn on the heating and that the CSM played a vital part in alleviating these pressures. The observed change experienced by shoppers of being *able to heat house in winter*, as captured in the SROI map, accounts for instances where this outcome was mentioned explicitly in our interviews and surveys. We need to note that as only half of all interviews and surveys took place in winter and also in considering the proportion of shoppers that participated in our research, this is likely a modest estimation of this outcome.

One final outcome within the dimension of Health and Wellbeing relates to the improved mental health of shoppers following their activities within the CSM. Increased food security and an improved diet have a positive impact on mental health (Ejiohuo et al. 2024) as do increased social interactions to which we turn next. But staying within the level of food security, this is especially crucial as food and food provisioning is on the societal level increasingly experienced as an individualised phenomenon where one's own failure to provide for oneself or one's family is seen as a source of shame and failure (Purdam et al. 2016). The upshot of this is that improved mental health levels allow individuals to actively participate in society and are better able to cope with challenges they are experiencing. By accessing the community supermarket, shoppers report that they are worrying less about food provision and feel happier by having no longer to 'keep thinking, "can I afford this, can I afford that"' (B008). One can grasp the multivariate benefits that shoppers experience when due to the CSMs they notice an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing: 'it's just that little bit less of pressure growing on me, it is just that one less thing, you put it to the backburner, today is sorted, you can deal with something else' (B004). A

further mental health and wellbeing experience relates to the smaller layout of CSMs where individuals, due to a number of reasons (e.g. stress related to Covid or social anxiety) prefer the CSMs over larger supermarket chains.

Community Building and Community Resilience

The second dimension revolves around social connectedness and the benefits individuals and communities draw from them. These outcomes are especially important as they can provide long-term support systems within the community. For the purposes of the SROI we identified two major and similar outcomes that tap into distinct benefits for community building. While the outcome *increased community cohesion* is expressed through the financial proxy “feeling belonging to the community”, the outcome *reduced social isolation* is measured via the proxy “talking to neighbours regularly”. These outcomes clearly reinforce each other yet they can be separated. The former relates more positively to community building and resilience through the development of a shared life within a locality, including the challenges that people might face and the collective or individual resources available to deal with them. The latter encompasses a community’s overall perceived quality of life and operates on the personal and interpersonal level of realising and experiencing meaningful relationships, affection, and friendship through interactions with neighbours. Accordingly, CSMs play a core role as a hub of community engagement and support in a number of ways, countering rising feelings of individualisation and responsabilisation:

It [the community supermarket] is about bringing the community together and knowing that you're not on your own. When I see people here I see I'm not just me and my situation, there is a lot of people. Sometimes from my perspective I always thought I'm the only one but you're not. There is a lot of people. Just coming here makes me help see that. (B002)

Accounting for reduced social isolation and community cohesion, then, aims to highlight the importance of interpersonal encounters in their community. Here, the shoppers were excited about the difference that seeing familiar faces regularly makes in their lives. Over 67% of our interview sample mentioned benefits experienced from increased social interactions, which can be as simple as having a reason to leave the house and having the opportunity to have small chats within the CSMs. This finding is consistent through both CSMs, with shoppers recounting their enthusiasm of having the CSM as a local hub where frequent interactions amongst the same people resulted in increased social interaction even outside the community supermarket. In this sense, CSMs prove to be community connectors and a starting point for the building of relationships: ‘I feel closer to the community now than I did before. I feel like people know me a bit better (...) A lot of people have lived here for years, now that I go there, they talk to me, I feel like I am now pulled in more into the community’ (J011). These encounters, which become possible due to the existence of the CSMs, reportedly range from stopping in the street to have a brief chat with a neighbour to established friendships – also across generations and people who might otherwise not have crossed paths: ‘Since I've been here I met a lot of different people I didn't know lived in the community (...) I made lots of new friends, some friends even ring me on the weekend and I've been to coffees like midweek (...) They're all different ages as well, so it's not just people my age, some of them are elderly, some people are lonely’ (B005).

Another interesting finding that several shoppers mentioned was the ability to *gain advice locally* in the CSMs that otherwise they would not have. These instances were numerically rarer, but shoppers highlighted how much of a difference it made to them, for instance by becoming aware through informal exchanges about social benefits they were entitled to and did not know about. Or, more formally, receiving crucial information about end-of-life care provided by the regular Citizens Advice stall in the Hope Community Supermarket.

We can trace here how community cohesion and resilience outcomes intersect with health and wellbeing outcomes. First, through a more stable support network and engagement within the community, as well as through daily instances that bring a smile to people's face, such as a friendly social interaction between people of different ages within the CSM. Community building further relates to health benefits that might follow when trust and cooperation is established by caring for each other in the community, such as helping each other with grocery shopping during illness or other circumstances. Similarly, increased financial comfort allows individuals to have the means to afford to spend time with friends or family over a coffee or drink at the local community centre or pub.

Agency and Independence

The outcome of *increased agency or integrity* emerged in our analysis through stories of shoppers mentioning that they can now be an active member of society. "Feeling in control of one's life" (the proxy that we used for this outcome) was a core finding in our interviews and surveys with shoppers that was closely linked to a feeling of dignity. While other forms of food aid and charity offer important support to people in need, this is often experienced as demeaning and shameful (Purdam et al. 2016). The negatively perceived element in many food aid projects of being means tested, as well as the experience of having to passively wait for one's bag, food parcel, or plate to be filled without much control or choice about what ends up in there, was compared by several shoppers with their experience in the CSMs. Shoppers in the CSMs were clear about how much they value the freedom that entering a "regular" shop brings, coupled with the feeling of being in charge of what enters their shopping basket. In the most extreme cases, we have heard that when shoppers in the past would have needed to access food aid they would often avoid it due to the perceived social stigma attached to it. The prevalence of these sentiments and comparisons to other food aid initiatives came without any prompting from interview or survey questions. Instead, we asked respondents to reflect on what a CSM means for them or how they imagined CSMs and whether their experience matched expectations or not.

This positive, agential experience of being able to be in control of your grocery basket was also linked to an increased feeling of personal integrity. Access to diverse and high-quality items and not the 'dregs of society's bits and bobs' (B004), was linked to the shoppers' ability to afford what they consider socially and culturally acceptable products. For some even the unpredictability of what precisely is available week to week was exciting and they were able to try out different products that otherwise would have been outside their budget. This interrelation between health, mental health, and agency comes out strongly in the following quote:

I can have something that is a little bit more adventurous, positive, I am not stuck with two bits of bread and something and feel really angry and feel my nutrition affecting my health, I can have something that gives me a bit more of an independent feeling (...) to actually give people a bit of a variety in their life has such an effect on morale. (B011)

Mapping Outcomes for Staff and Volunteers

Stakeholders	How many in group?	Outcome	Impact
Staff	2	Sense of purpose/ sense of doing something meaningful/ rewarding work	£3,989.16
Volunteers	34	Regular volunteering	£67,815.72
		Increased confidence	£327,919.80
		Increased sense of belonging	£207,929.75

The other two key stakeholders that were important for us to map onto the SROI are CSMs' staff and volunteers. These stakeholders are vital through their input in setting up and running the supermarkets, but also, through our research with them, we identified that they also experience important outcomes that should be accounted for in terms of social value. Regarding volunteers, it has already been identified by scholars in social value research that *regular volunteering* has a social impact. This was the first impact that we accounted for, as the volunteers we interviewed mentioned in different ways an increased sense of doing something meaningful by offering their time to a service that seeks to support some of the most vulnerable people in their community.

There is a community spirit, within the team. We all live within the vicinity of the supermarket. I treat it like it is a job even though I don't get paid for it. But if I didn't like the job, I wouldn't do it. I thoroughly enjoy my time here, so that's why I do it. And I'd rather be doing something productive with my time than sitting at home, not doing a lot. There is only that much housework to do, I'd rather be productive and do something. [I feel] a sense of accomplishment, I have done something. (BV003)

Both staff and volunteers expressed very strongly a positive impact in their *sense of belonging* to the community. Interviews with them highlight their motivation to build trusting and caring relationships with shoppers who are often sharing personal stories of disadvantage and life experiences of loneliness. Staff

and volunteers understand the importance of such interactions as a way to contribute to the alleviation of stigma associated with poverty and food insecurity.

I find, not only for myself, this is a tremendous thing we are doing for the community. In regards as to people that come in. We started doing the tea table with the biscuits and the cake and they all sat there a little bit nervous. Now, all these months later, they are all friends. They laugh, they sit there, have their cup of tea. (BV002)

Another outcome for this stakeholder group is the recognition and appreciation that shoppers show them. This has a positive impact linked to *increased confidence* and self-esteem in two areas; first, feeling competent in working as a member of a team to offer an important service, and second, having a sense of fulfilment in developing a safe space for shoppers to share their worries and challenges, but also cheerful stories and achievements. All of the above outcomes were accounted as social impacts for the volunteer stakeholders. While the staff stakeholders are identified as experiencing similar impacts (apart from the regular volunteering), for them we mainly focus on *a sense of purpose*. This is because all of the staff that we interviewed had already been involved in community work or charitable projects for several years.

So for us, it's about having that love and grace for people and meeting them where they are. So that we have that ethos behind it. But for me when I go into the community supermarket, yes, I do see shopping, but I also see a community, a family that feels welcome and comfortable. Probably at their most vulnerable actually. And I really, we are really, really keen to steer away from people feeling like it's a place to come to feel pity or anything of that nature. So a community empowerment project. How about that! (BST002)

They come and they come and tell you life stories. And it's people who also are coming out. They're still coming out after Covid, because one lady comes in, and she said, it's the only shopping I can do now. I do everything else online (...) therefore, paying supermarket prices and having no interaction with people. And she said, you know I'll be back next week, and so that is, but she's not confident enough to actually come out so hopefully, with a bit of encouragement she'll be joining others, you know. Talk some things. There's a whole which it [the community supermarket] is helping them feel better. So self-esteem, isn't it? (JST002)

Mapping Outcomes for Essex County Council Staff

Stakeholders	How many in group?	Outcome	Impact
ECC Staff	2	Sense of purpose/ sense of doing something meaningful/ rewarding work	£1,108.10

Essex County Council developed the project and offered the initial funding to start each of the CSMs. We have accounted for staff time in designing and supporting the project and also the amount of funding

invested into the project. The main observations from this group of stakeholders, the ECC staff that worked on this project, described their experience of having a *sense of purpose* in developing an intervention that improves the health and wellbeing of people and contributes to the resilience of local communities:

We had a reporter come down and they did a bit for Feeding Britain for the Times. And the reporter was asking people as they came in (...) And every one of those people that spoke had their own reasons for wanting that kind of provision to be there. They're all different. Largely financial, but not always. Some was around just actually having the opportunity to come out, not have to get on the bus to do something, but kind of come and see someone, see a friendly face, that sort of thing (...) It really makes me really proud to see that it makes a difference and really realise how. (ECC001)

People actually go there for their full shop and they're not there just because of the price but because they like the interaction. So there is the community part of the community supermarket. It's a place where people don't only go there to just have your food shop. They're there to actually talk to other people to essentially make friends, have that interaction and build more of a community (...) You know, the community market is tackling a lot of mental health issues within these community groups who are normally quite isolated, but it's also helping them build financial kind of resilience as well. Yeah, I feel like it's a quite an important part. And I'm really quite happy to be part of it, to see the impact. (ECC002)

SROI Value

The last step is to calculate the SROI value for the first year of the programme based on the work of the Hope AND Brooklands CSMs (2022-2023). For this purpose, we map the (financial and non-financial) investment and compare them with the social impacts assessed above. When mapping the total inputs on the project we accounted for the following investments of time and funding: **£376,183.96**

Funder	Amount in £
Essex County Council	£168,120.00
Feeding Britain	10,000.00
Clarion Housing	5,000.00
Asda	500.00
Be well fund	12,943.00
CVST Utilities	500.00
TDC	4,000.00
ECC HSF	25,000.00
CDS Action Charitable Trust	1,000.00
ECC Household support fund vouchers	160.00
Volunteers time (12584 hours x minimum wage £11.44) ⁷	143,960.96
Essex County Council Staff time ⁸	5,000

After accounting for all of the inputs and impacts that we have identified and making adjustments for deadweight, displacement, attribution and drop off as conservatively as possible according to the SROI methodology, the final figures are as follows:

Total Investment	£376,183.96
Total Present Value of Benefits	£5,931,452.59
Ratio of benefit-to-investment	15.77:1

Comparing the extrapolated investments for 2022-2023 with the sum of the monetised impacts, the SROI value is 15.77. **This means that every pound invested creates impacts in the monetised equivalent of £15.77.**

⁷ This does not reflect actual salaries. However, in SROI it is important to account for the time invested by volunteers as part of the total investment.

⁸ This amount corresponds to the number of hours and salary rate per hour of the two ECC staff.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report investigated and measured the impact of the “Bringing Community Supermarkets to Essex” programme and in particular the social value of the two first community supermarkets (CSMs) in Essex, the Hope Community Supermarket and the Brookland Community Shop, for people and local communities through the use of qualitative research and the Social Return on Investment framework. Based on the analysis of the collected data, **the SROI evaluation shows that every £1 invested into the two CSMs has generated a social return of £15.77 to local residents, communities, and the state.** This demonstrates positive change in different areas of health and wellbeing, as well as a positive impact on food security and food waste.

The SROI evaluation can be used by Hope and Brooklands Community Supermarkets, and Essex County Council, to demonstrate the social value of their intervention to policymakers, funders, and investors. This report should be shared and discussed with all relevant stakeholders and across the Essex Community Supermarkets to encourage reflection on positive outcomes and foster knowledge and understanding of impact processes related to food security and food waste. This report showcases that the “Bringing Community Supermarket to Essex” programme has made food more accessible and affordable for individuals, families and communities. The Hope and Brooklands Community Supermarkets are evolving into community assets and connectors able to support individual and community resilience and capacity.

The combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to explore and measure the broader social value and impact of the two first CSMs in Essex allowed us to capture outcomes that are often difficult to measure or calculate in conventional cost-benefit analyses. The changes in the lived experience of stakeholders are vividly illustrated in the quotes included in this report, which also provide a more intimate, complex, and personal account of the value and impact created by the CSMs. The positive outcomes range from improved quality of life (health and wellbeing) due to increased food security, to social inclusion and community building, through to improvements in independence and agency that strengthen a feeling of dignity. The different outcomes that this research captures and evaluates indicate the capacity of the intervention to provide results in all of the 6 main areas identified as key targets in the inception of the programme (see introduction). The 6 areas are of course interconnected and, as mentioned, several of the outcomes as well as the three main dimensions that inform them (Health and Wellbeing, Community Building and Resilience, Agency and Independence) are interlinked. In this sense, our analysis highlights the development of CSMs as key assets which can address a wide range of life experiences related to low food security, primarily by providing access to diverse and affordable food and essential non-food goods while reducing the burden on household budgets.

Access to quality food is also linked to healthier diets and less stress to provide adequate food for one’s self and family. In our qualitative findings, the majority of the shoppers shared feelings of enjoyment, relief, and satisfaction related to their capacity to afford meat or fresh vegetables and fruits on the one hand, and treats such as popular brands of crisps, cereals, or cookies for their loved ones and themselves on the other. Moreover, shoppers felt empowered and supported to interact with other people, share experiences and tips, and learn about other services, projects, and resources available in the community. As a result, CSMs are not only capable of providing a safe space of proximity, reciprocity and belonging for shoppers, but have showed that they can become crucial community connectors to address social isolation and facilitate access to information and awareness of health and care services and resources. This is also a key motivation of the organisations and volunteers, all of whom have expressed their

commitment to values of care, generosity, mutual aid, and respect in addressing the multifaceted challenges linked to individual and community food security. Finally, in terms of food waste, as most of the food goods that are sold in CSMs are redistributed surplus food, their activities reduce the volume of food sent to landfills and related emissions, and increased awareness of food waste among staff, volunteers and shoppers.

Recommendations

The evaluation of the two CSMs in Laindon and Jaywick has revealed many areas in which they have a meaningful impact on the lives of people and their local community. Through our research we have identified additional areas that can contribute to the work that CSMs are doing, improve their operation, and allow them to better demonstrate the social value they create. Whilst there are no definite solutions to guarantee a sustainable future for CSMs that are about to enter a new stage in their development as the funded programme comes to an end, below we address some key recommendations that stand out from our analysis:

FOR COMMUNITY SUPERMARKETS

- Moving forward, CSMs can now look at other aspects of their work using the SROI evaluation or other evaluation methods. The SROI template developed here can provide the ground for identifying relevant outcomes and stakeholder groups.
- Sustaining a systematic engagement with shoppers and volunteers to understand from their perspective changes in their experience and how they value this change. This can happen through an annual survey (online or in-person) and the organisation of engagement meetings (twice a year) where shoppers will be invited to share stories and feedback. This could assist with performance reporting and provide an input to guide strategic planning that will help to ensure the long-term sustainability of the projects. This will also enhance shoppers' participation in monitoring and evaluating outcomes. Further qualitative research would also improve the ability to identify and measure social impact.
- Drawing on the principles and information of this report, as well as by focusing on their vision, specific contextual factors (in terms of locality and demographics) and shoppers' feedback, CSMs can develop their own 'Theory of Change'. This will allow them to map their outcomes more effectively and consider how their projects meet the objectives that they have set. In addition, this exercise can reveal potential all-around activities with added value for the shoppers, volunteers and the local community. This approach may prove beneficial in sourcing additional funding and expanding the scope of their project.
- Providing training and support to assist volunteers to move into paid work where appropriate, in aspects of the service such as food hygiene and safety, meal preparation and nutrition, interpersonal and communication skills.
- Improving record keeping and monitoring of food sourcing data. This is an important step in developing a more holistic understanding of the food system within which they operate. In turn, this could lead to the consolidation of community-run food systems with an emphasis on local food growing and food production stakeholders and initiatives.
- Collecting and monitoring data about the volume of food surplus received and redistributed. This will allow CSMs to demonstrate their positive impact in the reduction of food waste. Similarly, collecting data on reduced packaging and on products that are sourced locally (thus contributing

to the reduction of transportation emissions) could allow them to demonstrate a broader positive environmental impact.

- Developing relationships with local farmers and gleaning projects (such as the Gleaning Network) to provide greater access to healthy food that meets dietary and cultural needs. This could provide additional nutritional value to food provided with a focus on dietary requirements. In addressing dietary and cultural requirements of their shoppers, CSMs can collect relevant data at the first point of contact with shoppers through their registration forms and as part of an annual survey as suggested above.
- Developing a regional umbrella organisation to provide CSMs with infrastructure and visibility to build capacity. This organisation would provide training, build partnerships with suppliers to act as a recognised partner, collect national data, share best practice, advocate to public authorities for favourable policies, and measure impacts at local and national levels to encourage replication.

FOR LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

- Developing policy to incentivise the redistribution of edible food to CSMs with an emphasis on local producers, retailers, and distributors.
- Ensuring that CSMs are adequately resourced by local authority support in terms of funding, sufficient fridge and freezer capacity to maximise food stocks, and access to suitable premises.
- Supporting access to larger and unrestricted grants so that projects can build sustainable infrastructure.
- Assisting CSMs in developing links with training providers on topics such as food safety and nutrition, public health initiatives, logistics and accounting, etc.
- Supporting CSMs to develop a local advice network in each district.
- Encouraging cross-sector approaches by creating links and delivering in partnership.
- Addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity by lobbying for policy changes to ensure living wages and appropriate welfare benefits, and ensuring access to comprehensive support for underlying circumstances related to individual and community food security.

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