

Churches are increasingly involved in running and supporting food clubs – often known as pantries – helping families to cut their food bills amid the long-term economic fallout from the coronavirus pandemic.



St George's Church Everton, Liverpool

The food club at St George's Church, Everton, opened a year ago and now has more than 140 members.

Members pay £3.50 per visit entitling them to choose a range of items, with the typical shop valued as at least £20– including fresh meat, fruit, vegetables and tinned goods.

The catchment for membership is made up of families from two local primary schools (the pantry is open at school drop-off time) and residents of the local Everton ward.

The area is classified as a 'food desert', according to Dr Naomi Maynard, who co-founded the club – meaning there isn't an affordable supermarket within easy travelling distance. FareShare, the food surplus charity, provides the club with supplies.

Dr Maynard, who is Network Coordinator for Feeding Liverpool and Food Security Lead Executive for Together Liverpool, the joint Diocese of Liverpool and Church Urban Fund venture, said:

“The Pantry at St George's has become a key part of our local community, building relationships, tackling food waste, increasing access to healthy food and supporting households through easing the pressure on weekly food bills.

“As a member-run food club, our volunteers are a vital part of the pantry community, coming from both within and outside the Church



...way we serve our community”

The Church of the Resurrection, Upton Priory, Macclesfield

The Church of the Resurrection on Upton Priory estate, Macclesfield, opened a food club in September. The club was set up after the church worked with local supermarkets and FareShare, with help from volunteers, to deliver hundreds of food parcels to local families during the first lockdown.

The club has received funding from Cheshire East Council and is supported by FareShare.

Members pay £3.50 for up to 15 items – they are able to take as much fresh fruit and vegetables as they would like. So many households have signed up – 120 families so far and this is growing – that the club introduced time slots for shopping to avoid queues and help keep to physical distancing rules.

Andrea Fitton, the Church of England Youth and Community Minister employed to work on the Upton Priory estate by neighbouring St Peter's Church, said: "The Core Pantry provides people with a choice and they can shop like they are in a supermarket, with a basket.

"They can walk around – we make it as Covid secure as we can. There is dignity in having choice."

- The Your Local Pantry network, modelled on a scheme first created by Stockport Homes, has been expanded across the country since 2019 by Church Action on Poverty, the ecumenical social justice charity.
- The network has more than tripled in size since the start of lockdown, with 42 clubs launched or launching in Britain.
- The clubs work with churches, charities, local authorities and housing associations across the country.

Source URL: <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/churches-open-food-clubs-amid-economic-fallout-pandemic>