

Pantries mean better health and savings for thousands

More than 2,200 people in 750 Edinburgh households are enjoying the financial and health benefits of community Pantry membership, new research published today reveals.

The *So Much More* report looks at the impact of the Your Local Pantry network, which includes 100 Pantries across all four nations of the UK. Six of those are in Edinburgh: in Broomhouse, Craigmillar, Leith, Muirhouse, Pilton, and Wester Hailes.

The authors of the report found that the average Pantry visit typically now saves members £21 a week, meaning that regular members can save more than £1,000 a year.



They also found evidence of extensive benefits in several categories:

- **Finances: 97%** of members say Pantry membership has improved their household finances, with **50%** saying it had made things a lot better
- **Food waste: 98%** say helping reduce food waste is important to them
- **Health: 83%** say membership has been good for their mental health and **68%** say it has been good for their physical health
- **Community: 74%** feel more connected to their local community and **66%** have made new friends
- **Food access and variety: 69%** of members are eating more fresh fruit and vegetables; **67%** are trying new foods; **59%** are eating less processed food; and **47%** are eating more food

Rachel Brown, Your Local Pantry model development coordinator, said: "I've been privileged to work closely with all six Edinburgh Pantries, and have seen the amazing difference they are making to people's lives. Community groups across Edinburgh have really embraced the Pantry approach.

"In compiling this report, we've heard some really uplifting stories of Pantries bringing people together, easing isolation, improving people's health and helping people to save money.

"Individually and collectively, the Pantries have achieved so much more than we ever imagined, and they are also a reminder that communities can do so much more when they rally together.

"Many communities longed for years to be able to bring people together in a supportive way around food, while still upholding people's individual dignity and choice. Pantries have been an amazing success story, bringing renewed hope to thousands of people in Edinburgh, and also across England, Northern Ireland and Wales."

Pantries are membership food hubs, laid out like small shops. They are open to residents of a defined local area. Members pay a few pounds each week, and in return can choose ten items of groceries worth many times more.

Collectively, the Edinburgh Pantries support 2,219 people living in 751 households.

Pennywell and Fresh Start Pantries in Edinburgh were highlighted in particular in the report for having pioneered a new family membership option, which enables even greater savings for an extra £1.50 a week. The idea began as a summer holiday measure, but was so popular that it was made permanent and the idea has now been shared with all 98 other Pantries.

The Pantry network is coordinated by the charity Church Action on Poverty. It said that Pantries had achieved so much more

than anyone expected, but that there was also still so much more that the Government needed to do to address some of the cost of living issues that Pantries members highlighted.

Niall Cooper, chief executive of the charity, said: “Community organisations have long warned that charity is not the long-term answer to household food insecurity. Many Pantries are now having to spend more on food to top up their stocks, as FareShare struggles to meet rising need. This should be a wake-up call to the whole of the UK. Everyone should have access to good food, and Government must do much more to guarantee everyone can afford the essentials, and prevent even more people being swept into poverty by an economy beyond their control.”

To read the report in full, or find out more about Pantries, [click here](#).



