

## **Appendix 2**

### **Overview of 2024/25 Social Supermarket Projects**

Belfast City Council supported 21 social supermarkets during the financial year 2024/25 with funding received from the Department for Communities CSP.

Social supermarkets aim to provide food and/or food vouchers and other essential goods as well as wraparound services to households across the Belfast City Council area that are facing food insecurity. They are either set up as a small shop or they distribute food vouchers. Some have a nominal membership fee and all offer food, cleaning products and toiletries at discounted prices.

Some social supermarkets are situated within large community organisations; others offer support to particular interest groups. Each operate in a slightly different way as they respond to the needs of their own communities but all of them offer wraparound provision and/or signposting to services such as benefit checks, debt advice, training and employment advice and childcare. Most work on a referral basis only.

The social supermarket funding programme supports the anti-poverty and inclusive growth work being undertaken as part of the Belfast Agenda. Representatives from several social supermarkets are members of the Belfast Sustainable Food Partnership and sit on the Partnership's Food Accessibility Working Group. The Partnership is currently developing a food strategy for the city which will include a section on food insecurity.

During 2024/25 four quarterly networking meetings were held with the social supermarkets. These meetings offered an opportunity for the projects to meet each other and share ideas, for us to provide updates on funding and to invite guest speakers. The meetings alternate between being online and in person at one of the projects. This gives everyone an opportunity to see how other social supermarkets are run and to glean ideas for their own project.

A report on each of the 21 social supermarkets supported during 2024 to 2025 is below.

Strategic Partners	Description	Award	Households/ Individuals supported	Location and office DEA DEAs supported
Ashton Community Trust	The Pantry at Ashton Community Trust has been supporting families in North Belfast since April 2022. A 12-week programme offers both food and food vouchers and provides those impacted by the ongoing cost of living crisis and systemic poverty with a range of wraparound measures. Referrals are made through a network of trusted partners.	£50,000.00	306 households / 946 individuals	North: <i>Oldpark</i> DEAs supported: Oldpark, Castle, Court, Black Mountain, Botanic, Titanic
Belfast & Lisburn Women's Aid	The project provides food parcels, food vouchers and other support for women (and their children) who have suffered domestic violence or been victims of modern slavery. Unique support plans are created for each woman and workers ensure the women are aware of their rights as well as options so that they can make decisions that benefit themselves (and their children) and help keep them safe.	£30,000.00	124 households / 255 individuals	South: <i>Botanic</i> DEAs supported: Balmoral, Botanic, Black Mountain, Castle, Collin, Court, Lisnasharragh, Oldpark, Ormiston, Titanic
Blackie River Community Groups	This project provides holistic support to families experiencing financial struggles. Families are given food vouchers over a 3-week period and can engage in a range of wraparound services, support and signposting including benefits advice, debt management, cooking on a budget and nutrition.	£50,000.00	228 households / 741 individuals	West: <i>Black Mountain</i> DEA supported: Black Mountain
Boring Wells/ Larder>East	Larder>East provides those on limited incomes with nutritious, fresh food sourced as locally as possible, whilst retaining dignity and giving agency to the individual. Membership of £5 gives access to a weekly shop of about £40 including fresh fruit and veg, eggs, milk, bread and non-perishable items. Larder>East builds relationships with small, local producers and businesses, keeping wealth within the community to support a more resilient local food economy.	£50,000.00	267 households / 661 individuals	East: <i>Titanic</i> DEAs supported: Balmoral, Lisnasharragh, Ormiston and Titanic

Compass Counselling	A community food project based in the Shankill area of west Belfast. The supermarket has been operating since December 2023 and serves around 15-20 people per week. Service users are provided with £5 ticket which enables them to choose a set quantity of food and essential items to the value of around £50. Wraparound support is also provided.	£11,800.00	131 households / 390 individuals	City wide: Court DEA supported: Court
Disability Action	The Disability Action Food Voucher Scheme provided a sustainable response to food insecurity experienced by disabled people. It provided a £100 food voucher along with wraparound services including advice on debt, benefits, budgeting, housing, employment support, mental health services, mobility services and human rights advocacy.	£35,000.00	320 households / 970 individuals	City wide: <i>Titanic</i> DEAs supported: Black Mountain, Botanic, Castle, Collin, Court, Oldpark, Ormiston, Titanic
Donegall Pass Community Forum	When participants are referred to the social supermarket at Donegall Pass CF, they agree their individual action plan and receive a food voucher. The project also has a physical social supermarket.  There is a high level of engagement with both the social supermarket and the wraparound services and evaluation results have been overwhelmingly positive.	£37,112.00	139 households / 376 individuals	West: <i>Botanic</i> DEA supported: Botanic
Footprints Women's Centre	Footprints social supermarket operates on a membership basis. A person may self-refer or be referred by a professional agency. Members can do a weekly shop in the supermarket for a period of 6 months. Nutritious ready meals are prepared and packaged in Footprints' community kitchen.  Members receive 1-1 life skills coaching, mentoring and training courses. Creche places are available. The project offers a dignified shopping experience providing food and a range of wraparound services and programmes to enable members to transition from financial crisis to a more stable lifestyle.	£37,273.15	357 households / 758 individuals	West: <i>Collin</i> DEAs supported: Collin, Black Mountain, Court, Balmoral

Forward South Partnership (FSP)	<p>Forward South Partnership (FSP) coordinates a social supermarket supporting the South Belfast locality, primarily focusing on the DEAs of Balmoral and Botanic. Additionally, it is a city-wide support network to the work of the Roma Support Hub that provides wraparound support for the Roma communities across Belfast.</p> <p>The model provides members with choice instead of pre-selected food parcels. The member chooses the items putting their needs and choice at the forefront. The project also provides food vouchers to cater for any special dietary/cultural requirements and/or extreme financial circumstances.</p>	£49,500.00	232 households / 991 individuals	South: <i>Botanic</i> DEAs supported: Balmoral, Botanic, Court, Castle, Collin, Titanic, Oldpark
Glencolin Residents' Association	<p>Glencolin Residents' Association was established in 2000 to tackle poverty related issues and improve the lives of families and individuals living in an area of multiple deprivation.</p> <p>The social supermarket funding enabled the group to deliver food vouchers and wraparound services including debt and counselling advice, healthy eating advice and guidance, benefits advice, housing advice and physical and mental health referrals.</p>	£10,000.00	90 households / 349 individuals	West: <i>Black Mountain</i> DEA supported: Black Mountain
Grace Women's Development	<p>This group offered £50 food vouchers to project beneficiaries within a wider context of a cohesive, joined up family support/action plan. This included 1:1 support for welfare and housing advice. Each beneficiary completed a benefit check, Solihull parenting course and a healthy eating workshop.</p> <p>The social supermarket initiative enhanced the family support services delivered locally and offered a wide range of wraparound support.</p>	£1,250.00	6 households / 20 individuals	North: <i>Oldpark</i> DEA supported: Oldpark
Hanwood Trust	This project supported those living in the Ormiston areas of deprivation, especially Tullycarnet, Clarawood, Braniel and Knocknagoney by providing	£30,000.00	294 households /	East: <i>Ormiston</i> DEA supported: Ormiston

	<p>a holistic approach to support. It provided food vouchers and uses eligibility criteria including a benefits check, low income, and referrals from local Councillors and as well as from community and voluntary sector organisations and local food banks.</p> <p>The project signposted to EBIAC for benefit support and advice and to Barnardos for family support and meal planning. It offered pathways to mental health, training in interview skills, and housing support through the Housing Community Network Forum.</p>		661 individuals	
HERe NI	<p>This project offered food vouchers and wraparound services to LGBTQIA+ women experiencing financial difficulties. It was advertised through the group's social media channels and mailing list. Every applicant took part in a health and wellbeing assessment which identified any additional needs.</p> <p>The project has seen an increase in the number of applications from both black and ethnic minority and trans individuals who are now engaging with other internal support services as well as from people who had not previously engaged with them and are now participating in various peer support groups and counselling services.</p>	£16,449.17	94 households / 171 individuals	North (citywide service): DEA DEAs supported: Balmoral, Black Mountain, Botanic, Castle, Collin, Court, Lisnasharragh, Oldpark, Ormiston, Titanic
In This Together	<p>Using a holistic approach to food insecurity, In This Together provides sustainable food and hygiene provision to people who are experiencing hardship or social isolation within East and South Belfast.</p> <p>The social supermarket is open to all, there is no criteria. Clients register and pay £4.50 for a weekly shop which can include fruit, vegetables, tinned goods, fresh meat, bread, dairy and hygiene items. They can use the service for as long as they feel they need.</p>	£50,000.00	361 households / 933 individuals	East: <i>Titanic</i> DEAs supported: Lisnasharragh, Ormiston, Titanic

LORAG	<p>This project was delivered with key partners: Lower Ormeau (LORAG), Market Development Association and South Belfast Alternatives.</p> <p>These organisations distributed food vouchers; wraparound support was provided by them along with a range of wider partners. LORAG used family support staff to provide help and advice for those that needed follow-up support.</p>	£4,000.00	385 households / 1194 individuals	South: <i>Botanic</i> DEA supported: Botanic
Loughview Community Action Partnership	<p>The Scullery at Loughview Community Action Partnership (LCAP) supported families with food supplies for a period of 11 weeks. Referrals came from advice workers, schools or LCAP members.</p> <p>While individuals or families were attending the programme, they received food, toiletries and household items and were referred to wraparound services such as debt counselling, benefits advice and housing advice for additional support.</p>	£49,936.00	95 households / 342 individuals	North: <i>Castle</i> DEAs supported: Castle
Southcity Resource & Development Centre	<p>This social supermarket is part of a consortium of organisations in south Belfast: Southcity, Windsor Women's Centre, GVRT and BSCR. Partners recognise that one problem is often the cause or result of another, so, rather than addressing a single issue at a time; they look at a client's situation holistically.</p> <p>The project distributed food vouchers and dealt with issues ranging from debt, benefits, housing, employment, training and consumer issues to health and education. As a result of the wraparound projects delivered, there is a greater awareness of groups and activities in the area with an increase in the number of people volunteering for projects.</p>	£50,000.00	473 households / 1108 individuals	South: <i>Botanic</i> DEAs supported: Balmoral, Botanic, Castle, Collin, Oldpark

Street Soccer NI	<p>The social supermarket funding complemented the existing Homeless Support Service offered by Street Soccer. Those accessing the service were able to get assistance with food and daily necessities.</p> <p>While those engaged in Street Soccer's services are primarily homeless, they often present with additional barriers including unemployment, low income, addiction, mental health, and asylum seekers. These contributing factors all result in a service user group that struggle to make ends meet. The project offered food vouchers and ran alongside a food store stocked through community donations.</p>	£22,000.00	697 households / 936 individuals	South: <i>Botanic</i> DEA supported: Botanic
Upper Springfield Development Trust	<p>This project worked with a wide range of stakeholder partners that referred individuals and households for food vouchers and wraparound support. People were able to self-refer as well.</p> <p>Each household was able to access one £100 food voucher. A key component of the project was the wide-ranging holistic wraparound support.</p>	£50,000.00	510 households / 1598 individuals	West: <i>Black Mountain</i> DEAs supported: Black Mountain, Collin, Court
Vine Centre (North Belfast Advice Partnership)	<p>This project provided temporary food support through food vouchers to people living in the Upper North Belfast area. Its specific objectives were to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(a) Provide participating low-income households with support to reduce their food costs, maximise the impact of their income for their weekly shopping</li> <li>(b) Promote practical skills like menu planning and cooking on a budget and encourage healthy eating</li> <li>(c) Provide additional support to families by referring or signposting them to relevant support services within their local community.</li> </ul> <p>The project used eligibility criteria which focused on those who have experienced disruption, instability or change to their income and who therefore benefit from temporary food support and additional support.</p>	£49,500.00	215 households / 507 individuals	North: <i>Oldpark</i> DEAs supported: Black Mountain, Castle, Collin, Court, Oldpark

West Belfast Partnership Board (WBPB)	<p>The WBPB is in a unique position in that is the strategic lead within West Belfast on several themes including health and wellbeing, education and economic development. Through its extensive networks it identified significant need of families in financial distress due to the cost-of-living crisis.</p> <p>This project provided food vouchers and a wraparound support service to families on low income, on benefits or asylum seekers with little to no recourse to public monies. WBPB aimed to ensure that families in severe financial distress were offered a holistic service including financial help through vouchers, benefits advice, debt management, addiction support service. Nutrition and education and training opportunities were also provided.</p>	£49,500.00	253 households / 387 individuals	West: <i>Court</i> Black Mountain, Collin, Court
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## Case Studies

1. A woman was referred to the social supermarket for food support. She told the coordinator that she struggled to go out and would often remain at home for days. Her weekly appointment was a great way for her to keep to a routine. She began to integrate more into the wrap-around provisions, attending the workshops and classes. She has begun to volunteer with the project and has stated that helping gives her a purpose to get ready and out in the mornings.
2. Liza is a 42yr old woman and mother of 3. She has been married for twenty years and experienced significant abuse throughout her marriage. The project completed a needs assessment and discovered that Liza was in quite a lot of debt. She was referred for advice and support and given a food voucher which helped greatly as paying off the debt left Liza with very little food for herself and her children.
3. Jenny has a serious health condition that curtails movement, affects every part of her body and causes chronic pain. When she first came to the social supermarket, she was overwhelmed by the quality and value of the food that she was able to receive. Her condition can be exacerbated by poor diet and to be able to access sourdough bread, a wide range of fresh fruit and veg and pasture fed hen eggs as she can here, was a huge thing for her.
4. Sarah, a disabled woman living alone, was facing eviction after falling behind on rent during a period of poor health. The vouchers eased her anxiety and gave her time to engage with our housing advice project, which helped negotiate a payment plan with her landlord. Through this support, Sarah not only kept her home but also built financial confidence. She described the scheme as “the bridge that kept me from falling through the cracks at a really frightening time.”
5. We realised that one of our social supermarket members was not able to shop because of caring responsibilities for her partner. We arranged for a food package to be delivered to her and made a referral for fuel vouchers. When her partner’s health improved, the woman discussed her concerns about accessibility and mobility as she was fearful of being stuck in the house all the time. We were able to support her with a wheelchair for her partner. She was delighted with this as it meant they could get back out in the community.
6. A woman who was still under asylum seeker status came along to the social supermarket. She was offered 1:1 mentoring and signposted to migrant/refugee charities. She expressed how grateful she was that she was “not just a problem to be moved on to another organisation” but supported to look at a long-term solution to the issues she was facing. She has joined the Volunteer Garden Group and has taken part in our family meals where she was able to interact with other women and integrate more fully into the community.
7. A woman was referred by a friend who knew she was LGBTQIA+. She disclosed that she was recently bereaved and lost her long-term partner. She talked about how isolated and lonely she had been and how she had been struggling financially. A meeting with our Older Women’s Support Officer gave her confidence to attend a group session. She has since attended several more and is starting to open up within the group. The women has expressed how much of a support the group and Older Women’s Officer has been to her and how she looks forward to the meet-ups and is starting to make friends within the group. She described the support and the voucher as life changing.

### Quotes from Social Supermarket members

- “The Social Supermarket has been a lifeline for me. I also love that someone phones to check in with me”.
- “I always feel so supported there (social supermarket). It’s a wee community, you always run into someone there and the staff are always so good to me”.
- “The food vouchers helped me at a really hard time, and I also accessed transport services which helped me complete my course”.
- “I never thought I’d be in this position. Worked all my life - raised a family, paid my taxes, did everything by the book. But after my husband passed and the pension didn’t stretch as far as it used to, I found myself having to make choices I never imagined: heating or eating, as they say. When I first heard about the social supermarket, I hesitated. I thought it was charity - a handout. And I’ll admit, pride got in the way. But I went early in the morning when it wasn’t busy. And to my surprise, it didn’t feel like charity at all. The volunteers were kind, no judgment, just smiles, advice and warm words. For the first time in a long time, I didn’t feel invisible, they even invited me to join other programmes and a women’s group in the Community Centre. I still wish I didn’t need the help. But I’m grateful it’s there. And grateful for the people who make it feel like a community, not a last resort”.
- “It really helped me and my family during the Christmas period when I was struggling”.
- “The Social Supermarket and the support services really turned things around for me. I no longer feel like I’m just surviving day-to-day. The voucher helped me feed my kids, and the financial advice gave me hope for the future. The emotional support helped me deal with the stress, and now I’m in a full-time job that I’m excited about. I feel like I have a new sense of control over my life, and I can finally provide the stability my children need”.
- “I am 78 years old. I was staying out of the house as much as I could to cut bills down but everything costs money. I am embarrassed to say, I was visiting friends and neighbours to get a coffee or a wee bit of food hoping they wouldn’t realise what I was doing. I felt so ashamed. I could have cried when I got vouchers as I was able to fill my cupboard and heat house. I would like to thank everyone involved in the voucher process, I worked all my life and never thought I would be this badly off”.
- The social supermarket is “a lifeline that gave me space to get back on my feet”.
- “It wasn’t just about food — it was about feeling like I mattered and that someone cared”.
- The social supermarket is “a god send”.

### Lessons Learned from projects

- Women’s Aid are very aware that they cannot address all these problems, so they work in partnership with many other organisations such as family solicitors, Advice N.I., PSNI, women’s centres, benefit offices and community centres.

- Having support on hand - like our consultant for the money box project, our benefits advisor and our community gardener - creates much greater engagement than organising events that members have to return for. We try to make all our workshops work within normal shopping hours or at the very least immediately upon closing.
- The project has grown very rapidly in a short period of time however we have faced many challenges such as interpreting and translation, we were able to source additional funding and translate some recipes into Arabic, we have also provided food labels for each of food stock in English, Arabic and Romanian.
- We continue to be overwhelmed by the urgent need in the community for direct help and continued support.
- As a result of the wrap around projects being delivered, there is a greater awareness of groups and activities being provided in the area. We have seen an increase in the number of people volunteering for a number of projects.
- We experienced a significant surge in demand in November leading up to Christmas. This was an unexpected spike that exceeded our initial projections. The increase in demand required us to adjust our outreach and distribution strategies to ensure we could assist as many individuals and families as possible during this critical period.
- The funding process was challenging as the funding was not received until May2024 therefore a 12-month project had to be delivered in 8/9 months.