

**NATIONAL
SCHOOL
PANTRY
NETWORK**

by **RETHINK FOOD**

IMPACT REPORT

September 2025-July 2026



A Year of Building Something Bigger

The past academic year has been a landmark one for the National School Pantry Network (NSPN).

What began as an ambitious vision has grown into a national movement supporting schools to tackle food insecurity in a way that is sustainable, dignified and community-led.

During our first full academic year, schools across England joined the Network with one shared belief: no child should be too hungry to learn.

While a number of schools received direct NSPN funding to establish or strengthen their pantries this year, the impact reaches much further. More than 340 schools are now part of the Network, sharing ideas, resources and best practice to support children and families experiencing food insecurity.

Perhaps most significantly, the National School Pantry Network was recognised within the UK Government's Child Poverty Strategy, highlighting our approach as an example of community-led innovation helping schools respond to rising levels of child poverty.

This report celebrates the schools, families, funders and partners who have made that possible.

Together, we are proving that school food support can be about much more than food.

It can build confidence.

It can strengthen communities.

It can create lasting change.

Nathan & Kevin

Nathan Atkinson and Kevin Mackay
Co-Founders
Rethink Food CIC



At a glance

347

Schools in the
**National School
Pantry Network**

196

Schools applied
for funding

National Recognition

Featured within the UK
Government's Child Poverty
Strategy



700+

Families receiving regular
food support every week

1,500+

Children have been provided
with food every week

2.5k

Website visitors

Why It Matters

Food insecurity remains one of the greatest barriers to learning.

Our latest national survey of schools found:



Nearly one in three schools told us too many children (over 31%) regularly arrive at school hungry.

Schools don't simply want emergency food.

They want sustainable ways of supporting families with dignity.

That's exactly what the National School Pantry Network provides.

The NSPN Difference

Unlike traditional food provision, school pantries place families at the centre.

Schools know their communities.

They understand cultural needs.

They know which families need extra support.

The Network provides funding, resources and guidance that enables schools to create support that works locally.

The result is healthier food, stronger relationships and reduced stigma.

The Impact on Children

Schools reported remarkable changes following NSPN funding.

86%

Children no longer arriving at school hungry

86%

Hunger no longer acting as a barrier to learning

71%

Improved health and wellbeing

43%

Improved behaviour and classroom engagement

Schools also reported:

- children feeling happier
- improved attention spans
- fewer children falling asleep during school
- improved attendance and punctuality

When children have access to nutritious food, they don't just eat better...they learn better.

The Impact on Families

The transformation extends beyond the school gates. Schools reported:

100%

Parents became more confident engaging with school

86%

Improved wellbeing and reduced stress

86%

Greater engagement with school life

71%

Families talking more openly about food at home

Funding has helped remove stigma, strengthen trust and create meaningful relationships between schools and families.

One school told us:

"The funding has allowed us to support families who are struggling. It has strengthened communication, built trust and helped us develop better relationships."

Another shared:

"Families have one thing less to worry about. Knowing they can provide a healthy meal each week makes a huge difference."

The Impact on Schools

The National School Pantry Network has become much more than a food programme. Schools reported:

57%

Able to support more families

29%

Improved engagement with parents

Schools also highlighted **improved attendance, stronger safeguarding relationships and increased opportunities to signpost families to wider support services.**

Voices from the Network

"Families now have **greater choice and access to healthier ingredients** that reflect our community."

"Without the funding we simply **wouldn't have been able to meet the growing need.**"

"The funding has created a **lovely social group** while supporting our food bank."

"The funding has **reduced stigma around food poverty** and helped families feel comfortable asking for support."

Schools Leading the Way

Our first funded schools have shown what can be achieved when schools are trusted to lead local solutions.

Each school has developed a unique approach, responding directly to the needs of its own community while sharing learning across the Network.



Demand Continues to Grow

Our first year has proven the model.

The challenge now is meeting demand.

Today:

- **347 schools are members of the Network.**
- **110 schools are currently awaiting funding.**

Every one of those schools represents families who could benefit from healthier food, reduced stigma and stronger community support.

The opportunity to create impact has never been greater.

Making It Possible

The National School Pantry Network is only possible thanks to the generosity of our funding partners, corporate supporters and grant makers over the last 12 months.

Their investment has enabled schools to provide dignified food support, strengthen relationships with families and ensure children have access to the healthy food they need to thrive.

We have exciting partnerships joining our mission in September 2026 with Comic Relief and Sainsburys.



The more people who know about the problem, the more people who can become part of the solution.



A Community Getting Behind the Cause

The NSPN isn't powered by funding alone. It is powered by people.

Throughout 2025/26, an incredible community of individuals, businesses, colleagues, friends and supporters have taken on challenges, organised events and raised money to help us reach more schools and families.

From golf days, to football matches and padel tournaments to climbing challenges and running events, our supporters have found their own ways to turn their energy, time and determination into meaningful support for the NSPN.

Corporate partners have also played an important role, with raffles, fundraising activities and team challenges helping to bring colleagues together around a cause that matters. These events have not only raised vital funds but have introduced the NSPN to new audiences and opened doors to new relationships and partnerships.



Looking Ahead

The National School Pantry Network has moved beyond a pilot.

It is now a growing national network supporting schools to tackle food insecurity with dignity, choice and community at its heart.

With continued support from funders, partners and sponsors, we can help hundreds more schools create lasting change for children and families.

nationalschoolpantrynetwork.co.uk