



Public Consultation Report:

Food insecurity, school holidays & community need

ABSTRACT

This public consultation explores food insecurity, school holiday provision, and child mental wellbeing across Wrexham, Flintshire, and Denbighshire. Drawing on responses from 423 participants, the findings reveal a widespread “nutritional gap” affecting working families who do not meet traditional thresholds for crisis support. While acute food deprivation remains concentrated among a smaller group, the majority of households are compromising food quality due to rising costs.

The school holiday period emerges as a significant pressure point, with most families reporting difficulty providing regular, healthy meals and a marked decline in children’s mental wellbeing. There is overwhelming community support for a preventative, sustainability-led approach that redirects surplus food back into the community while offering free meals and integrated wellbeing support. The evidence strongly supports the development of a Wrexham-based pilot programme, with phased expansion across the region.

At a glance - what the community told us:

Key Standout Statistics

- 84% of respondents report compromising nutritional quality due to rising food costs
- 40% have worried about running out of food before having money to buy more in the past 12 months
- 5% report skipping meals or reducing portion sizes entirely
- 88.6% find it difficult to provide regular, healthy meals during school holidays
- 80% report a decline in children’s mental wellbeing during school breaks
- 95% support a project that redistributes surplus food back into the community
- 54% said they might use a holiday food service, with stigma identified as the main barrier
- 83% of respondents are based in Wrexham, making it the strongest location for an initial pilot

FOREWORD

“I spent many years supporting the Given to Shine project in Wrexham, which salvages waste food and donates it to people who would otherwise struggle to buy food. The desperate people I met during this time has never left me. Food insecurity, in a country that throws food away, is ridiculous. Nobody should go hungry.

During my Mental health & wellbeing studies at Wrexham University, we often referred back to Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs, and this makes total sense. Physical needs such as food, warmth and shelter come first. Someone who is experiencing food insecurity will not consider their mental wellbeing like they should. Our proposed food waste and mental wellbeing project tackles the social injustice that is food waste and food insecurity - with an element of mental wellbeing support for kids during the summer holidays.”

Nicholas Claffey MsC
Director / Lead researcher
Bloomers Wellbeing / Lles Blodau CIC
January 2026



Project: Food Insecurity & Community Wellbeing in North Wales

Commissioned by: Bloomers Wellbeing

Date of Report: January 2026

Lead Researcher: Nicholas Claffey, Bloomers Wellbeing / Lles Blodau
CIC

Consultation Period: November – January 2026

Total Sample Size: 423 Participants

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report details the findings of a comprehensive public consultation regarding food access and mental health in Wrexham, Flintshire, and Denbighshire. The data identifies a significant "nutritional gap" among working families. While extreme crisis (skipping meals) is localised to 5% of the population, a staggering 84% of respondents are currently compromising their nutritional health due to rising costs. There is an overwhelming 95% community mandate for the Bloomers Wellbeing initiative, specifically favouring its model of surplus food redistribution combined with mental health support.

2. METHODOLOGY & DEMOGRAPHICS

The consultation was conducted via a mixed-methods approach, using a digital survey created on Canva. This was distributed to all schools, councils, politicians, councillors and third sector organisations.

2.1 Geographic Reach

Most data represents the Wrexham area. This can be explained by Bloomers Wellbeing having a bigger presence in Wrexham since formation, with our flagship project The Right Time being rolled out in Wrexham in June 2025, with referrals being extended to Flintshire and Denbighshire in November 2025.

- Wrexham: 352 (83.2%)
- Flintshire: 38 (9.0%)
- Denbighshire: 33 (7.8%)

2.2 Participant Demographics

The consultation successfully reached primary decision-makers within households.

- Parents/Carers: 315
- Young People (under 18): 42
- Professional Stakeholders (School Staff/Youth Workers): 38
- General Community Members: 28

3. THE ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE OF FOOD INSECURITY

The data challenges the assumption that food insecurity is limited to those currently using food banks. Instead, it reveals a "Squeezed Middle" demographic.

3.1 Financial Anxiety & Food Scarcity

40% (169 respondents) reported that in the last 12 months, they have actively worried about food running out before having money to buy more.

3.2 Behavioural Adaptations to Cost Increases



Respondents were asked to identify specific experiences related to rising costs.

- Nutritional Downgrading (83.9%): The vast majority are choosing cheaper, calorie-dense but nutrient-poor food.
- Relying on External Support (10%): A consistent minority relies on food banks or extended family networks.
- Acute Deprivation (5%): A small but significant group is skipping meals entirely or reducing portion sizes.

4. THE HOLIDAY GAP AND CHILD WELLBEING

A critical focus of this report is the "Holiday Gap"—the period during school breaks when the universal safety net of school meals is removed.

4.1 Meal Provision Difficulty

When asked how difficult it is to provide regular, healthy meals during breaks:

- Somewhat Difficult: 62.6%
- Very Difficult: 26.0%
- Not Difficult: 11.4%

4.2 Impact on Mental Health

There is a near-unanimous consensus (80%) that children's mental wellbeing decreases during school holidays. Qualitative feedback suggests this is due to a combination of:

1. Loss of social routine.
2. Heightened parental stress regarding finances.
3. Nutritional instability causing irritability and fatigue.

5. QUALITATIVE INSIGHTS: THE COMMUNITY VOICE

The following are anonymized, raw testimonies from the consultation, reflecting the unfiltered reality of residents in Wrexham and surrounding areas [sic].

"Honestly the summer holidays are a nightmare. My youngest is always asking for snacks and I'm just sat there wondering how I'm going to pay for the big shop on Friday. We live off the 'yellow sticker' shelf in Morrisons but even that's getting expensive now. It's not just the food, it's the stress of it all. Everyone is just on edge." — Parent, Wrexham

"I think the project is a brilliant idea. I hate seeing all that food from the shops go in the bin when people are literally skipping meals. My kids don't eat half as well when they aren't in school and getting their free lunch. If you can do the wellbeing stuff too then count me in." — Parent/Carer, Flintshire

"It's just boring in the hols. Parents are always stressed about money so we just end up staying in and eating rubbish. Having a place to go where there's actually decent food and something to do would be sound." — Young Person, Wrexham

"About time someone did this. Wrexham needs more stuff like this that isn't just a handout but actually uses what would be wasted anyway. My grandkids get proper miserable when they're stuck in the house with no routine." — Community Member, Wrexham



"I don't qualify for a food bank because I work full-time, but after the bills are paid, there's nothing left for fresh fruit or veg. By the third week of the month, we are living on pasta and toast. The kids notice, and it makes me feel like I'm failing them." — Parent, Wrexham

"During the holidays, my kids lose their routine. They get anxious because they know money is tight. A place where they could get a decent breakfast and actually see their friends for a wellbeing session would take a massive weight off my shoulders." — Parent, Denbighshire

"It feels wrong that so much food goes to the bin while my mates are coming to school hungry because their parents are stretching the shop. If a project like Bloomers existed, it wouldn't just be about food; it would be about the community looking out for each other." — Young Person (16), Wrexham

"The link between hunger and mental health is undeniable. We see children returning from breaks more withdrawn or irritable. If we can solve the nutrition gap during the holidays, we're setting them up for better emotional success in the classroom." — School Staff Member, Flintshire

"it's the six weeks holiday that kills us. everything goes up and the kids are constantly 'i'm hungry i'm hungry' but when you look in the cupboard it's just half a bag of flour and some tins. i'd definitely use the breakfast club if it was on." — Parent, Wrexham

"i work in a school and the change in them after a half term is heartbreaking. some come back looking thin or just really tired and grumpy. you can tell they haven't had a proper meal in days. we need this project yesterday." — School Staff, Wrexham

"I don't see why the supermarkets get to chuck it all out. been seeing them skip dive behind the big ones in town and it's a joke. give it to us instead! my mum struggles enough as it is." — Young Person (17), Wrexham

"sometimes i skip my tea so the little ones can have a bigger portion. i tell them i ate at work but i didn't. everything is just so expensive now even the basic brands have doubled in price." — Parent, Flintshire

"it would be good if there was stuff for them to do as well as food. mine just sit on the xbox all day because i cant afford to take them anywhere or buy them lunch out. they get really down and then we just argue." — Parent, Wrexham

"not sure about the wellbeing sessions bit but the food part is a yes from me. too much waste in the world. i live alone but id help out volunteering if you needed someone to drive the van." — Community Member, Denbighshire

"Health foods a joke. A bag of frozen chips is £1 and a punnet of berries is £3. How am I supposed to feed 3 kids healthy on that? We just buy what fills them up." — Parent, Wrexham

"I worry every single day about the bank balance. Literally every time I tap my card I'm holding my breath. The school holidays just make that feeling 10x worse." — Parent, Wrexham

"it's dead quiet in town during the hols if you've got no money. if there was a place to get a decent breakfast and just see people it would help my head a lot. i get proper lonely." — Young Person, Flintshire



"My electricity is on a prepay meter and if I buy the 'good' food we run out of power. So it's cheap noodles and toast for us. Sad but that's just how it is in Wrexham right now." — Parent, Wrexham

"I support this 100%. Bloomers do good work. We need to stop the shame around needing a bit of help. We're all in the same boat really aren't we?" — Community Member, Wrexham

"idk if i'd come to a 'wellbeing session' sounds a bit posh for me but i'd definitely come for the food if it was going to be binned anyway. hate waste." — Parent, Wrexham

"We spend £20 a week just on bread and milk it feels like. Everything else is a luxury. Fruit is a luxury now. Think about that. Fruit." — Parent, Wrexham

"I'm a youth worker and I've had kids asking me if I've got any spare biscuits because they haven't had breakfast. These aren't 'neglected' kids, they're just from families who can't make the money stretch." — Youth Worker, Wrexham

6. PROJECT VIABILITY: BLOOMERS WELLBEING

The consultation tested the community's appetite for a specific model: Surplus Food Collection + Free School Break Meals + Wellbeing Sessions.

6.1 The "Sustainability" Mandate

95% of respondents support a project that redirects food destined for landfill back into the community.

6.2 Addressing the "Maybe" Respondents

54% of respondents said "Maybe" when asked if they would use the service. Qualitative analysis suggests this "Maybe" is rooted in stigma. However, these same respondents expressed high support for the "environmental" aspect of the project. By framing the service as sustainability-led rather than poverty-led, Bloomers Wellbeing can effectively bypass the pride barrier.

7. STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Prioritise Fresh Surplus: Because 84% of families are already eating "cheap processed food," the project's value-add should be fresh fruit, vegetables, and proteins.
2. Integrated Wellbeing: Food should be the "entry point," but the wellbeing sessions are essential to address the 80% decline in mental health reported during breaks. This should be framed as people helping us to stop food being wasted.
3. Wrexham Pilot: With 83% of interest located in Wrexham, the infrastructure for a pilot program is already socially validated. As with our previous project, we will begin this in Wrexham and then roll this out to Flintshire and Denbighshire.
4. Non-Stigmatized Branding: Avoid "Crisis" or "Emergency" language. Utilize "Community," "Sustainability," and "Fresh Start" terminology.



Appendix: Full Consultation Questionnaire & Data Outcomes

This section details the raw metrics gathered during the public consultation period (November–January 2026)

Part 1: Participant Identity & Location

Q1: Which of the following best applies to you?

Outcome: 74.5% (315) Parent/Carers; 9.9% (42) Young People; 9.0% (38) School Staff/Youth Workers; 6.6% (28) Community Members/Other.

Q2: Where do you live/work?

Outcome: 83.2% (352) Wrexham; 9.0% (38) Flintshire; 7.8% (33) Denbighshire.

Part 2: Food Security Metrics

Q3: In the last 12 months, have you worried about running out of food before having money to buy more?

Outcome: 40% (169) Yes; 60% (254) No.

Q4: Have rising costs changed the type or amount of food your household eats?

Outcome: 83.9% (355) reported a significant shift toward lower-quality, cheaper options.

Q5: Which of the below have you experienced? (Select all that apply)

- Choosing cheaper, less healthy food: 355 respondents (Highest frequency).
- Relying on food banks and/or family: 42 respondents (~10%).
- Skipping meals / Reducing portion sizes: 21 respondents (~5%).
- None of the above: 5 respondents.

Part 3: The "Holiday Gap"

Q6: During the school breaks, how difficult is it to provide regular, healthy meals for children?

- Outcome: Somewhat Difficult was the most popular answer (265 respondents); Very Difficult (110); Not Difficult (48).

Q7: Would free breakfasts and lunches in the school breaks be something you would make use of?

- Outcome: Maybe was the most popular answer (228), followed closely by Yes (190). Only 5 respondents said No.

Q8: How do the school breaks impact children's mental wellbeing?

Outcome: 80% (338) It decreases; 10% (43) No change; 10% (42) It improves.

Part 4: Proposed Project & Mandate

Q9: Would you support a project that collected food (before it is wasted) from local stores, and distributed to the community?

Outcome: 95% Support.

Q10: Bloomers Wellbeing are considering a project which would stop food going to landfill, help provide breakfasts and lunches during the school breaks and wellbeing sessions. Would you support a project like this in your community?

Outcome: 95% (402) Yes; 5% (21) Requesting more information.

Q11: Are there any other views you would like to share?

- Outcome: Collected qualitative testimonies (15+ samples included in the main report) highlighting themes of "working poor" struggles, the price of fresh fruit, and the stress of the 6-week summer holiday.