



PATHWAYS OUT OF FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

A year of
showing up
for Crawley

APRIL 2025 - APRIL 2026

Supporting and empowering people to move through financial hardship – and out the other side.



WHY WE EXIST

Crawley has 8 neighbourhoods among the UK's most deprived, the highest Universal Credit claimants in West Sussex, and over a third of children growing up in poverty. Free Shop Crawley exists to show up for people, with no judgement, no barriers, and no time limit.

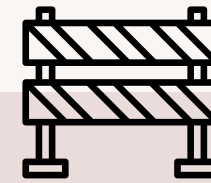


People can't afford the food and essentials they need

Families face impossible choices - food or heating, meals or shoes. With more month than money, some go without entirely.

Our Response →

The Free Shop - free food, fresh produce, and daily essentials, chosen with dignity



Some face barriers that make getting back on track feel impossible

Poor mental health, financial complexity, skills gaps, and lack of knowledge can trap people in crisis, even when they desperately want to move forward.

Our Response →

The Free Shop Offer - workshops, 1:1 support, Community Café, and Learning Lab access



Many people lack the community they need to feel healthy and well

The pressure of poverty pushes people to isolation. Many people arrive at Free Shop feeling invisible, ashamed, and entirely alone.

Our Response →

Community - events, volunteering, and a space where everyone belongs

APRIL 2025 - APRIL 2026

A year

by the numbers

600

people fed each week

2500

supported on their
journey out of
financial hardship

7600

attendances at the
Communtiy Cafe

96%

of customers
experienced reduced
financial pressure

3210

community event
attendances

1020

workshop
attendances

95%

of customers
reported improved
quality of life

300+

learning lab
attendances

The Free Shop

Our farm-style free shop is open five days a week, stocked with free fresh produce, groceries, and daily essentials. Every customer gets to browse freely and choose what they need, because dignity matters just as much as the food itself.

600

fed each week

25%

move on after 6 months

75%

move on after 1 year

"It has taken a big weight off my shoulders. Knowing every week we can get some help with food just takes some of the pressure off." - Free Shop Customer 2025



The Free Shop Offer

The Free Shop Offer is what helps people move forward, on to the pathway out of financial hardship. Through our Community Café, workshops, 1:1 support, and Learning Lab, we equip people with the confidence, knowledge, and skills to start getting their lives back on track - for good.



7600

community
cafe visits

1020

workshop
attendances

300+

learning lab
visits

"I hadn't realised how much money I was wasting... I now have £300 spare each month." - Workshop Attendee 2025

Our Community

Free Shop Crawley has always been about people, not just provisions. Through events, volunteering, and shared spaces, people build friendships, confidence, and a sense of purpose. Individuals who arrived feeling invisible now feel seen, valued, and part of something bigger - a community that genuinely looks after each other.

3210

community
event
attendances

25%

move on after 6
months

75%

move on after 1
year

"I have formed friendships and feel like I finally have somewhere I belong. It's like one big family." - Free Shop Customer 2025



IN THEIR OWN WORDS

Stories from our community

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"Without Free Shop's help my family would have had the bleakest end to 2025. I arrived with nothing but tears of shame, but they acted quickly and showed me there is no place for shame. My family have been so inspired by their wholesome approach. We know we belong not just to a great community but a family."

Free Shop Customer 2026

”

"The free shop is a lifeline to me. It means I'm not as isolated, my anxiety has improved massively. It has taken a big weight off my shoulders and helped with more than just food. It has helped me mentally, physically and financially. Without Free Shop I don't know where I would be."

Free Shop Customer 2026

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"I fled domestic abuse with 4 children and a bag of clothes. Free Shop was there. They helped me access support, helped us with food and clothes, and gave me the chance to volunteer. It gave me my identity back. Not as a victim or a survivor. I am now an employee with a career."

Free Shop Customer, then volunteer, now staff member

THIS YEAR

Our big moments from 2025-26

A BIGGER, BETTER SHOP

This year we moved into a larger shop space, creating a more welcoming, accessible, and dignified environment for our customers. It transformed the experience of visiting Free Shop and means we can serve more people more effectively.

YOGA

Customers told us about barriers to exercise (single parents, mobility issues, financial cost among others). We listened, applied to Sport England, and launched inclusive yoga sessions. They were fully booked with a waiting list from day one.

BEWBUSH COMMUNITY HUB

We spoke with over 100 local residents to design a new community hub from the ground up. 98% said they or someone they know would use it. We've signed the lease and renovation is under way - opening May 2026.

OUR PARTNERS

None of this happens alone...

FUNDING PARTNERS

The National Lottery
Crawley Borough Council
West Sussex County Council
Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust
The Garfield Weston Foundation
Sport England
Sussex Community Foundation
Three Oaks Trust
Sainsbury's
Vinci
Skipton Building Society Charitable Trust
Virgin Money Foundation

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Citizens Advice Bureau
Employ Crawley
The Melting Pot CIC
Pathfinders
Christians Against Poverty
Bear Learning
LPK Learning
Same Sky
Moonstones
THALES
Early Help
Crawley Play Scheme
Crawley Community Youth Service
Creative Crawley

BUSINESS PARTNERS

Everyone Active
Gatwick Airport
Access Garage Doors
Shear Water
Faegre Drinker
Guidewire
Volvo
The Hawth Theatre
Asda
Co-Op
Aldi
Enterprise
Hallan Cash and Carry
Horley Spinal
Taylor Made

LOOKING FORWARD

Whats next for Free Shop Crawley

OPENING BEWBUSH COMMUNITY HUB

The Bewbush Community Hub opens in 2026 - a warm, welcoming space for the wider community, with activities, partner support, and early intervention for people before they reach crisis.

STRENGTHENING FOOD SUPPLY

We're introducing a designated Food Distribution Coordinator to increase the food we source, reduce the ongoing shortfall between food costs and donations, and ensure consistent access to quality, nutritious food.

BUILDING LONG TERM SUSTAINABILITY

We're investing in fundraising capacity, community income, and corporate partnerships, so that Free Shop can keep showing up for Crawley, not just this year, but for many years to come.

WITH GRATITUDE

Thank you

None of this is possible without the generosity, commitment, and belief of everyone who supports Free Shop Crawley - our funders, our partners, our volunteers, our donors, and our incredible community. Every pound, every hour, every kind word makes a difference to the people who walk through our doors. From all of us, and everyone we support, thank you.

FREE  SHOP

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