Uttlesford Foodbank
Together with Trussell

Strategy

2026 - 2031

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Introduction From The Director

When Uttlesford Foodbank was established, it was with a simple but vital purpose: to ensure that nobody in our community goes hungry in a time of crisis. Sadly, despite the dedication of charities, community groups and public services across our district, the need for emergency food support remains a reality for many local people.

Over recent years we have seen first-hand the pressures faced by individuals and families across Uttlesford. While ours is often seen as an affluent rural district, many residents experience significant hardship. The challenges of rural living, including increased travel costs, limited access to services and hidden poverty, can make it especially difficult for people to access the support they need.

This strategy sets out our direction for the period 2026 to 2031. It reaffirms our commitment to providing emergency food to those facing financial crisis while recognising that food alone cannot solve the issues that bring people to our door. We want every interaction with Uttlesford Foodbank to be an opportunity for people to access wider support, build resilience and move towards improved financial wellbeing.

As a member of the Trussell network, our strategy aligns with the shared ambition of ending hunger today, ending hunger together and ending hunger forever. At the same time, this is very much a strategy for Uttlesford. It reflects the needs of our local communities, the experiences of our clients, and the insight of our volunteers, staff, trustees and partners.

Over the next five years we will continue to provide a compassionate, dignified and reliable emergency food service. We will strengthen the support available to people experiencing hardship, deepen our partnerships across the district, and use our evidence and experience to help shape solutions that address the root causes of food insecurity. We know that lasting change can only be achieved through collaboration, and we are committed to playing our part within a wider network of organisations working to build stronger and more resilient communities.

None of this would be possible without the extraordinary commitment of our volunteers, supporters, donors, referral partners, community groups and faith organisations. I would also like to thank our volunteers, staff and Board of Trustees for their guidance and dedication in developing this strategy and in supporting our work every day. Most importantly, I want to acknowledge the people who use our service. Their experiences, challenges and resilience continue to inform and shape our work.

While we know that the years ahead will bring both opportunities and challenges, none more so than attracting the levels of finance needed to deliver, we remain ambitious for our community. We will continue to respond when people are in crisis, but we will also work tirelessly alongside others to create a future where fewer people need our support and where every person in Uttlesford has access to the essentials they need to thrive.

Katy Mendes-Day
Director

Our Vision:

We will provide emergency food to those in crisis. We will support our clients to build resilience and reduce reliance on emergency food. Ultimately, we want to see our district thrive to a point where food banks are no longer a necessity.

Our Strategy:

This strategy sets out how we work towards that vision over the next 5 years whilst continuing to provide emergency food support to all who need it in our district. We aim to achieve this by:

- Addressing immediate need by providing a warm welcome and emergency food for people in financial crisis in Uttlesford
- Connecting every client with further support services to help guide them back to a place of financial resilience, and wellbeing
- Working together with local and national partners to amplify the voice of our clients, influence change and end the need for food banks

We sit within the Trussell network of food banks. Our strategy is based on Trussell's 2025-2030 strategy, Together for Change: Ending Hunger Together, and its three key themes: Ending Hunger Today, Ending Hunger Together, and Ending Hunger Forever.

You can read Trussell's strategy at https://www.trussell.org.uk/our-work/ending-the-need-for-food-banks/our-strategy.

How We Approached Developing This Strategy:

As part of the Trussell network of food banks, we often look towards them for guidance and direction; whilst Trussell's strategy for 2025-2030, Together for Change has been at the forefront of our minds during the development of our strategy, we have kept in mind the needs of our local communities and unique challenges that working in a DEFRA Rural-80 classified area presents.

The development of this strategy was led by our Director, with the support of the Board of Trustees. The insight of our staff and volunteers is invaluable as we move forwards and both groups were consulted throughout the process.

Delivering This Strategy:

Maintaining the charity's financial sustainability remains our overarching financial objective. This will be achieved by securing sufficient and appropriately diversified income, controlling expenditure, maintaining an appropriate level of unrestricted reserves, and ensuring that financial resources are directed effectively towards achieving our strategic objectives.

We recognise that this strategy is ambitious, and it is purposefully so. We also recognise that achieving it will drive a significant increase in our operating costs, requiring significant growth and diversification of our income. To this end, a dedicated fundraiser role has been created, and we will develop a separate fundraising strategy and delivery plans setting out how we will secure sufficient, diversified income to match our ambitions, whilst remaining in a position to deliver on our core purpose.

Our Strategic Aims:

Ending Hunger Today

1. We provide emergency food parcels to residents in Uttlesford who are facing financial crisis and are referred to us for support.
2. We welcome people into our service in a dignified, equitable and inclusive manner.
3. We provide our clients with appropriate support in the form of onward sign-posting and referrals to address their circumstances.

Ending Hunger Together

1. We work with our partners to develop and embed a holistic support network for residents facing financial crisis in Uttlesford.
2. We support our local and regional leaders to make evidence-based decisions and understand how the rural premium impacts those who are unable to afford the essentials.
3. We continue to be trusted by our community partners to guide and inform the delivery and development of services within Uttlesford, which will build resilient communities.
4. We engage with local schools, faith based organisations and community groups to expand their understanding of poverty in our district and encourage them to consider how they can support our work.

Working Towards Ending Hunger Forever

1. We promote and advocate for strategic joint-working within the District, in order to encourage investment to build resilient communities.
2. We work with partners to foster a culture of prevention and develop greater food security across Uttlesford.
3. We engage with national Trussell campaigns and other anti-poverty organisations to support wider advocacy work and influence change at the highest levels.

Our Guiding Beliefs

- ✓ *We acknowledge the impact of rurality in our District and the complex premium this creates.*
- ✓ *We will always be led by our own and other partners' data and insights when evolving and adapting our service.*
- ✓ *We view ourselves as an emergency service; we are part of the holistic solution but not the solution itself.*
- ✓ *We focus on what we do, and do it well.*

Ending Hunger Today:

Strategic Goal	How we will achieve this
We provide emergency food parcels to residents in Uttlesford who are facing financial crisis and are referred to us for support.	Develop financial and operational resilience by: ▪ Dedicated fundraising activity to secure sustained income ▪ PR and communications to maintain high level donations of appropriate stock ▪ Maintain and expand our strategic supply chain ▪ Evolve our referral policy to reflect our position as a provider of emergency food ▪ Invest in staff, systems and skills to support continuity of service ▪ Continue to maintain a resilient and robust volunteer base
We welcome people into our service in a dignified, equitable and inclusive manner.	Deliver aligned processes across the District: ▪ All clients follow the same journey from referral to receipt of parcel ▪ Optional collection service is available in Saffron Walden upon request ▪ Dedicated flexi-space and trained volunteers to provide a warm welcome, a cup of tea and a listening ear to collection and walk-in clients in Saffron Walden ▪ Work with partners to explore ways of replicating Saffron Walden services in the South of the District ▪ Flexibility to tailor a parcel to accommodate cultural, religious and health requirements
All clients are provided with appropriate support in the form of onward sign-posting and referrals to address their circumstances.	All clients receive a follow-up call from a dedicated team of volunteers shortly after the collection/delivery of their parcel: ▪ Discuss client circumstances, sign-post and refer to relevant support services ▪ Facilitate clients to build their own pathway in to or back to financial resilience and wellbeing ▪ Utilise available technologies and systems, such as STEP and Frontline, to provide tailored help ▪ Provide appropriate training and support for specialist roles undertaken by both new and existing volunteers

Ending Hunger Together:

Strategic Goal	How we will achieve this
We work with our partners to develop and embed a holistic support network for residents facing financial crisis in Uttlesford.	Regular open and informed engagement with referral partners: ▪ Provide clear visibility of our policy and process for inward referrals in order to ensure their clients meet the threshold for food bank support ▪ Identify, engage with and maintain constructive relationships with agencies, organisations and services working within Uttlesford who can support our clients to move towards financial resilience and wider wellbeing ▪ Support our partners in strengthening upstream interventions that reduce the likelihood of people needing food bank assistance ▪ Continue to build and maintain our sign-posting systems to ensure they are current and relevant to our client's needs
We support our local and regional leaders to make evidence-based decisions and understand how the rural premium impacts those who are unable to afford the essentials.	Collate data and research from internal, local and national sources and complement this with the voice of Lived Experience: ▪ Attend local and regional panels, meetings and forums to advocate with and for those living in hardship in Uttlesford ▪ Present and share data with key partners to provide context and promote understanding of the complex challenges of those referred to us ▪ Continue to develop our reputation both locally and regionally as a trusted representative of those facing hardship
We continue to be trusted by our community partners to guide and inform the delivery and development of services within Uttlesford which will build resilient communities.	We listen and learn in order to be present and knowledgeable: ▪ Allocate personnel and processes to building relevant insights ▪ Invest in training and skills to develop a sound understanding of the wider anti-poverty landscape ▪ Research and share best practice approaches with relevant partners and decision-makers
We engage with local schools, faith based organisations and community groups to expand their understanding of poverty in our district and encourage them to consider how they can support our work.	We offer meetings, presentations and talks tailored to different audiences to: ▪ Develop insight into the existence of poverty in our district and what drives it ▪ Build empathy towards those facing hardship and what action they can take to help tackle the issues surrounding it ▪ Inspire fundraising activities and donations to support food bank operations

Working Towards Ending Hunger Forever

Strategic Goal	How we will achieve this
We promote and advocate for strategic joint-working within the District, in order to optimise investment to build resilient communities.	Alongside Trussell, we keep abreast of government priorities and policies, both local and national, and consider how these impact those facing hardship: ▪ Attend Trussell briefings and take relevant local action, with particular regard to rurality ▪ Identify opportunities to co-design/deliver resilience focused and preventative services ▪ Proactively engage with local policy makers and budget allocators to ensure investment is channeled into activity which supports financial resilience ▪ Share our experience of positive inter-organisational collaboration with our partners to empower them to do the same
We work with partners to foster a culture of prevention and develop greater food security across Uttlesford.	We proactively engage with forums and initiatives which focus on building long-term solutions to food insecurity: ▪ Contribute to the development of an Essex Community Food Network ▪ Offer strategic input to key partner projects which will improve food security in our rural District ▪ Work with partners to develop a 'no wrong door' approach which promotes a more connected local support landscape, with less households reaching crisis
We engage with national Trussell campaigns and other anti-poverty organisations to support wider advocacy work and influence change at the highest levels.	We commit time and resource to campaigning and acting alongside Trussell and others on issues relating to the drivers of hardship: ▪ Contribute insight around the reality of poverty in a rural area ▪ Gather and amplify the voices of local lived experience ▪ Build strong connections with our senior local leaders and our MP ▪ Represent our food bank at national campaign events

Please direct all enquiries in relation to this strategy to director@uttlesford.foodbank.org.uk