



Norfolk and Suffolk Health and Care Awards 2026

Partnership with People and Communities Award

Norwich Foodbank Lived Experience Experts

Norwich Foodbank and Your Own Place CIC

Norwich Foodbank is recognised for its innovative approach to embedding lived experience at the heart of service design through the creation of a participatory panel of people who have experienced hardship and hunger. This group of 10–12 individuals, all with recent experience of using foodbank and advice services, has met monthly for over a year to share insights, shape support and influence change. By actively listening to those who use their services, Norwich Foodbank is moving beyond emergency provision towards supporting long-term independence and more responsive, person-centred provision.

The panel explores key issues such as referral processes, repeated storytelling to professionals, access to support, and the design of new initiatives like the Crisis and Resilience Fund. Members collaborate directly with professionals, local leaders and policymakers, including MPs and council representatives, ensuring their voices influence decision-making at multiple levels. Importantly, the group sets its own agenda, reinforcing genuine co-production and shared ownership.

The initiative places strong emphasis on trust, inclusion and empowerment. Participants report increased confidence, a sense of stability and feeling genuinely heard—often for the first time. Feedback highlights the transformational impact of being listened to and valued, with some individuals inspired to take further action, including establishing their own community initiatives.

By demonstrating transparency through “you said, we did” feedback and maintaining ongoing engagement, Norwich Foodbank has built meaningful relationships that sustain participation. As the project evolves, with partners stepping back into supportive roles, it offers a sustainable, scalable model for embedding lived experience in service design—ensuring support systems are shaped by those who know them best.