



# Love Driffield: Driffield and The Wolds Foodbank

An Insight Report

**healthwatch**  
East Riding of Yorkshire

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Cover picture: Love Driffield Decorated for Christmas 2023

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# Love Driffield Foodbank

## Introduction

### About Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire

Healthwatch provides an independent voice for the residents of the East Riding of Yorkshire. We listen to people's lived experiences of health and social care services and report these experiences back to service providers. As well as seeking the public's views ourselves, we also encourage services to involve people in decisions that affect them. Our sole purpose is to help make care better for people.



#### Our vision

To bring closer the day when everyone gets the care they need.



#### Our mission

To make sure people's experiences help make health and social care better.



#### Our approach – what is important to us?

- **Listening** to people and making sure their voices are heard.
- **Including** everyone in the conversation – especially those who don't always have their voice heard.
- **Analysing** different people's experiences to learn how to improve care.
- **Acting** on feedback and driving change.
- **Partnering** with the Government, health and care services and the voluntary and community sector to make care better whilst retaining our independence.

## About Love Driffield

Love Driffield is a Community Hub and Foodbank serving residents of Driffield and the surrounding Wolds. The charity was established in 2013, and it moved to its current premises in July 2021. Love Driffield creates emergency food parcels containing fresh fruit and vegetables, tinned food, cereals, bread, pet food, tea and coffee, personal hygiene products and more. Many other items are available from the foodbank on request, such as baby products, clothing, and emergency homelessness supplies. Between September 2022 and August 2023, Love Driffield provided emergency food parcels for adults **2973** times, with families accessing the service **1969** times. Love Driffield foodbank is supported by multiple organisations including Rafter's Greengrocers, Iceland, East Riding Hygiene Bank, and Nisa. Some organisations donate items whilst others allow Love Driffield to buy food and supplies at wholesale or discounted prices. Local farmers and allotment holders support the community by donating locally grown produce.

Love Driffield also acts as a warm space for clients and the public where they can sit and enjoy food and hot drinks with others. The trustee manager of Love Driffield, Angela Train, told Healthwatch ERY that instead of having food parcels ready to go like they previously did, they prefer to have clients wait a short time whilst the bags are made up. In this time, the clients are offered free hot drinks and snacks, and can browse items such as feminine hygiene products, books and CDs to take home. It is hoped that having clients wait a short while means that they will feel more comfortable whilst at the foodbank and are therefore more likely to talk to others whilst there.

As well as the regular foodbank service, Love Driffield supports the local community with many events and groups. Mums can access support at Mum & Tot Drop Ins where toddlers can play and socialise with others, as well as at baby events in which parents can pick up free clothing for their children. The East Riding's Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) team also work with Love Driffield to support families with children with SEND. Informal coffee mornings and play groups allow parents to access



**1433** bags of food were provided by Love Driffield between Oct – Dec 2023

and also share advice around SEND services and financial support available. Throughout the previous summer holidays several school uniform exchanges took place with around 150 families taking part, and this is a particularly important event now that uniform poverty is on the rise.

Over the Christmas period, Love Driffield supports households by creating hampers made up of double the usual food parcel and extra Christmas treats. In addition to the hampers, Love Driffield works with local schools, The Salvation Army, and other local organisations to identify families in need and provide them with Christmas toys for children. In December 2023, 110 bags of toys were distributed meaning 770 local children received gifts thanks to Love Driffield, and 150 Christmas hampers were created and collected.

The foodbank also works with East Riding Adult Learning and Employability to provide courses for local people, for example English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), which was developed following coffee and cake events to welcome Ukrainian refugees. Whilst at the foodbank, clients have the opportunity to access support from other teams and organisations which frequently visit Love Driffield, such as the Your Money team, Yorkshire in Business, Specsavers, Multiply (maths courses), Police Community Support Officers, and the Beverley Cherry Tree Community Centre.

## **The Beverley Cherry Tree Community Centre**

The Beverley Cherry Tree Community Centre (CTC) is a charitable organisation which was established in 1996. The centre provides many valuable services to the local community and surrounding area, with the Cherry Tree Pantry supporting people in crisis by providing affordable food with the help of Fareshare and local businesses. The Pantry allows people to visit once a week and pay just £5 for 10 items, from a choice of goods including fresh meat, cheese, frozen food, cleaning products, tinned food and cereal, as well as unlimited fresh fruit and vegetables. Located above The Pantry in the CTC is the Advice Centre where the public can get free, confidential advice on a variety of matters. The CTC supports individuals in applying for benefits such as pension credits, disability living allowance, attendance allowance, and blue badges, though people visit with a broad range of difficulties they'd like support with. Alongside this service in the CTC is the Hull and East Riding Credit Union which provides affordable loans and financial services.

The CTC also has services for children and young people, with The Little Gruffalos Pre-School which is rated Good by Ofsted, Out of School and Holiday Clubs, and a Youth Club. Currently the Youth Club is running without a permanent residence and is making

use of any local community venues which are happy to host it, although sourcing these proved to be difficult. Thankfully the CTC has recently received planning permission for a metal shipping container to be converted for use as a Youth Hub. However, the charity must now raise £80,000 to fund the development of this project.

In 2022, the CTC recognised the demand for an advice service in Drifffield so partnered with Love Drifffield to provide a free, confidential advice drop-in service within the Love Drifffield Foodbank. This service is the same as is offered in Beverley in that people can get advice in applying for government support schemes and help filling out DWP forms amongst many other things. Initially, just one advisor supported Drifffield, however the demand quickly grew to needing two advisors, and in the last 18 months, the CTC have supported around 600 clients, even through visiting for just two hours per week.

## Aims of The Project

In September 2023, the Community Services Project Officer began a project with both the Love Drifffield Foodbank and The Cherry Tree Community Centre (CTC). This project had five main aims:

- Hear the voice of seldom heard communities
- Engage with users of the Love Drifffield foodbank to share their lived experiences with the providers of health and social care services in order to encourage positive change
- Understand how the cost-of-living crisis is affecting residents, specifically lower income households
- Build a strong relationship with the Love Drifffield Foodbank and the CTC to offer HWERY support on a long-term basis
- Support the local community through volunteering at the foodbank, thus creating social value



## Information Gathering

The primary aim of this project was to hear the voice of seldom heard communities. Driffield is surrounded by rural areas; it is important that residents living in these areas are heard and that difficulties they are facing are understood. The Healthwatch ERY project officer initially planned to spend 4 weeks visiting the foodbank every Thursday morning, 8.30am – 12.00pm. However, the foodbank got busier each week with an increasing number of bags being needed every month. These rose from 239 in September, to 245 in October, 305 in November, all the way up to 644 in December despite the foodbank being closed for a week. It was agreed that the weekly visits would be extended through the Christmas period and finish at the end of 2023.

During the first hour, the project officer assisted in making up fresh fruit and vegetable bags for clients, preparing hot drinks for volunteers, and readying the communal area to open at 10.00am. This preparation time also gave the project officer and Angela time to discuss any current issues in Driffield, any plans and events coming up, and to share information and intelligence gathered.

Once the foodbank opened to the public, the project officer would offer hot drinks to clients and talk to them whilst they wait for their food parcels. At the beginning of the project, Healthwatch ERY had relatively little intelligence about Driffield-specific issues regarding health and social care services. Engaging with residents in general conversation created an organic way for these issues to be discussed. Each person was welcoming and happy to discuss their personal experiences. In addition to these conversations Jo Ramsey, the manager of the CTC, would often invite the project officer to sit in on the advice centre discussions with the client's consent. Joining these advice centre sessions was extremely valuable, not only for Healthwatch, but for the client and Jo too. Healthwatch ERY were able to support Jo in signposting the client to more services, as well as listening to the client's concerns, and reporting back issues to service providers. During this time, the project officer was able to build up a picture of common themes and issues within the Driffield area.

# Key Themes

## Digital Exclusion

Many healthcare providers are moving to online-based appointment booking systems. Whilst this can be more appropriate and efficient for some patients, it is not the case for everyone. Having an online system as the default is creating a barrier to accessing the services, as Healthwatch spoke to several people who either don't have internet access or a smartphone, or are unable to use them to make appointments.

- One resident told HWERY how she is able to use her smartphone and is therefore responsible for booking and managing GP appointments for her whole (adult) family, as they are unable to.
- Healthwatch ERY spoke to many residents who do not have access to Wi-Fi in their village, so rely on Love Driffield and other community spaces for their free Wi-Fi. Residents also struggle with poor rural phone signals, with one person being cut off from a phone call with DWP regarding their Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim.

Here, we can evidence and demonstrate how having many organisations rely on online systems creates difficulties in accessing these services for residents. Whilst this issue is not exclusive to Driffield residents, it is one that is contributing to existing health inequalities.

## Access to GP Appointments

Many residents expressed concern that they have never met their GP face-to-face, and some residents complained at a lack of continuity of care, as they see a different person at each appointment and are frustrated at repeating their medical history again.

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*"I dread ever needing my GP... I've never even met them"*

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- Patients of The Park Surgery are being urged to book GP appointments via an online triage system. Clients of the foodbank told Healthwatch ERY that this system takes weeks to get an appointment, which is often a telephone appointment and not with whom it has been requested with.

- When patients ring the GP surgery instead to book an appointment, they are instructed to book online, with some residents claiming that the receptionists are “rude”.
- Patients of The Medical Centre in Driffield complained that once they got an appointment with a GP, they were unable to discuss more than one difficulty so had to book multiple appointments throughout the week instead.
- Often patients of both Park Surgery and The Medical Centre described their GP surgeries as “too full” or “supporting too many people”. People in the neighbouring villages, such as Hutton Cranswick, have need of Driffield healthcare services too, meaning there is a huge demand for them.

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*“It’s like a cattle market” – One resident referring to their GP surgery*

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One lady explained that she would like to move her family from Park Surgery to The Medical Centre due to difficulty in getting appointments. However, her husband requires regular care, and she is concerned that a long waiting time for a new GP at The Medical Centre could mean too long a wait between doctor’s appointments for him.

- This lady said that her appointment letter for a colonoscopy had the wrong address on it, and therefore it went to someone in York, meaning that she missed her appointment.

## **Rural Challenges**

The rurality of Driffield and the surrounding Wolds can prove very challenging. Some residents told HWERY how they can struggle to access some healthcare appointments, such as ultrasounds and other investigatory procedures, due to needing to travel long distances. Many specialist services are run from Castle Hill Hospital, Hull Royal Infirmary, and Bridlington Hospital, which can cause difficulties for patients in rural areas. Whilst some people are able to drive, others rely on public or community transport which isn’t always ideal, or appropriate.

A number of residents expressed a desire for more services to be available at the Alfred Bean Hospital in Driffield. Currently, this hospital operates from 8am-8pm treating minor conditions, such as cuts and grazes, minor head injuries, wounds and insect bites. However this is by referral only from the Ill service and no walk-in appointments are accepted. Having more services available at the Alfred Bean Hospital would increase the accessibility of some healthcare services, such as hearing tests, which would be particularly beneficial for carers

who maybe cannot leave the cared for, or their homes, for long periods of time to travel further afield.

## **Pressures From the Cost-of-Living Crisis**

Healthwatch ERY heard of many ways in which the cost-of-living crisis is affecting residents. Some people have lowered the temperature of their heating and hot water, and are using them less frequently, though their bills are still higher than in previous years. It is now known that reducing the level of heating at home can have a detrimental effect on health, leading to respiratory problems, poorer cardiovascular health, and an increased risk of falls, loneliness, and social isolation (Janssen et al., 2022). It has also been found that older adults (typically referring to adults aged 65+) are at an increased risk of these negative health outcomes. This is of particular concern as Driffield has a higher percentage of adults aged 65+ (27.3%) than throughout Yorkshire and The Humber (18.9%) and across the East Riding of Yorkshire (26.3%) (ONS, 2020).

Whilst visiting the foodbank, it became clear that the demographics of the clients using the service were not what had been expected or assumed. Many people who receive support from the foodbank are working people. However the cost-of-living crisis means that there is often not enough money left for food after paying increasing rent and energy bills. Additionally, some healthcare services such as dentistry and ear wax removal services are difficult or impossible to find through the NHS, meaning that more money is being spent on healthcare than before, leaving even less disposable income.

During the three months of this project, three incidents of homelessness occurred at the Love Driffield foodbank. On one occasion, a Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) came across a person living on the street whom she had not dealt with before. The PCSO brought the gentleman and his dog to the foodbank for emergency support. The homeless person had suffered the tragic loss of his daughter, who had been stabbed, which impacted on his ability to work. This person's house was linked to his job as it often is in the agricultural industry, and therefore he lost them both. In May 2023, he applied for accommodation from East Riding of Yorkshire Council, but as he was then immediately homeless, he couldn't access emails from ERYC regarding any potential housing.

After being brought to Love Driffield, the gentleman was supported by the foodbank with emergency supplies such as food, warm clothing, and personal hygiene products. The CTC made numerous phone calls on his behalf until eventually accommodation in Hull was found through the Emmaus charity. In

addition, the CTC paid for this person's dog to get checked out at the vets and have a full grooming treatment. The PCSO who initially made contact with the homeless person picked up his dog from the vets and reunited the pair around 9.30pm that evening. This client was extremely appreciative of the support from all of the organisations involved.

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*"I can't afford a social life"*

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Another example of the effects of the cost-of-living crisis come from a client, who told HWERY how they work part-time in retail and that available overtime is unpredictable. This person spoke about previously working two jobs to cover the bills, however, this led to poor physical health and one job had to be given up. Currently, she works part-time and is supported by universal credit, though this leaves her with very little disposable income. HWERY spoke to her multiple times throughout the visits, and she disclosed that she struggles with mental health difficulties, particularly in the winter when it is cold and dark, and she describes it as *"going in your own little world"*. This lady says she cannot afford a social life, and often stays in bed all day. Love Driffield now runs a 'Warm Spaces' group on Wednesdays which is free and open to all, offering coffee and cake and a place to socialise with others. This group was suggested to the client as a way of having something to look forward to and other people to speak to which might impact positively on feelings of loneliness, and this was greatly appreciated by the client.

Talking to clients of the foodbank highlighted the importance of Love Driffield, and similar community centres, as they provide a safe, social, and comfortable environment for people to stay in with no expectations of payment. With an increase in social isolation and the cost-of-living crisis, it is important now more than ever that these community spaces are open and available to the public and are adequately funded. Furthermore, the regular visits emphasised the need for in-person support services, such as The CTC Advice Centre, as many people fall through the cracks of the online services and require the support of local charities.



### “It’s just not knowing who to go to”

Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire first met RA’s mum when she visited The Cherry Tree Centre drop-in advice service at Drifffield Foodbank. Mum had come to ask for help in filling out RA’s Disability Living Allowance form to get financial support for him. Jo was happy to complete the form with RA’s mum, however, this appeared to be the tip of the iceberg in terms of support that she would need.



RA is a 15-year-old with a complex combination of physical and mental health difficulties. RA’s mum reports that since undergoing surgery on his frontal-temporal lobe to treat his epilepsy, RA has had increased fatigue, poor attention and memory, disordered eating habits, increased sensory needs, and anxiety around social situations.

As no neuropsychological assessments were carried out before the brain surgery, it is not known for certain if it has had a direct effect on RA’s behaviour, although it did stop the seizures.

RA’s mum says that he has, and does, experience symptoms of depression and has previously attempted suicide, making him a highly vulnerable person.

RA used to go to school, though through poor health this was reduced to part-time, and he has eventually stopped going all together. Just before RA stopped attending school, he was supported by the Social Mediation and Self Help (SMASH) team, which his mum says he really enjoyed and benefited from.

As RA’s mental health deteriorated, he was referred by his GP to the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS). Since then, RA was referred to/between many services and specialists, including:

- Paediatric Psychosocial Service
- Muscular Skeleton Team
- Paediatric Neurologist
- Consultant Paediatric Neurosurgeon
- Epilepsy Surgery Coordination

- Sleep Hygiene Support
- Paediatric Neurology
- Dietician Park Surgery
- Principle Clinical Psychologist in Paediatric Neuropsychology
- Educational Psychologist
- Clinical Psychologist
- Dietician
- Long-Term Conditions Team (CAMHS)
- Consultant Paediatrician with Special Interest in Neurology and Epilepsy

Despite the number of referrals, RA's mum says that they are not receiving the support they need, and there has been poor communication between the services and the patient.



**“I don't know which way to turn”**



Some appointments were carried out through a video call, some were phone calls, and some services referred RA onto another service without seeing him.

RA's mum says that the regular appointments with the dietician were over the phone with herself, and that the dietician was yet to meet the patient face-to-face. RA's mum reports that his health had deteriorated to a point of losing his vision, and that he is underweight enough to affect how long he can comfortably sit for.

Although the referrals were happening in the background, RA's mum was left without support for both RA, and herself. RA's grandma (mum's mum) did live close by and was able to offer respite care to RA on a regular basis. However, grandma was forced to leave her home with the only alternative accommodation being around 20 miles away. Due to the stress of the situation making her unwell, grandma accepted this housing despite it isolating her from her family, particularly her own mother who resides in a care home. This change broke the

integral support network for RA's mum, who also has two other children to look after.

Whilst telling Jo and Healthwatch ERY about her battle to gain support for RA, RA's mum questioned:



**“What would it take to get access to these services?”**



This particular case shows how, despite involvement of many different services across multiple NHS Trusts and the Local Authority, there can be a lack of integration between these services and poor communication back to the patient and their carers. In addition to this, too much pressure can be put on the parents of young people experiencing difficulties to chase after services, despite them already being at a crisis point.

## Summary

This project between Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire, Love Driffield Foodbank, and the Beverley Cherry Tree Community Centre aimed to engage with vulnerable community members to understand key health and social care issues in the region. The following areas can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the initiative:

### Community Engagement

- Healthwatch staff had face-to-face interactions with an estimated 64 individuals accessing foodbank services over the 3-month period.
- In-depth conversations uncovered actionable themes regarding access to care.
- Advice centre participation enabled real-time support for clients.

### Actionable Intelligence Gathering

- 5 key themes identified with numerous examples and anecdotal evidence from target user group.
- Powerful case study exemplified gaps in health services and need for better care coordination.
- Findings highlighted digital exclusion effects and cost-of-living healthcare barriers.

### Partnership Building

- Weekly collaboration strengthened relations between organisations.
- Foodbank volunteers created additional social value.

### Impact Potential

- Report compiled and disseminated to health entities to prompt change.
- Renewed patient-centric focus for service providers.
- Data to justify calls for increased funding for community resources.

### Limitations & Next Steps

- Small sample size over short time frame.
- Expanded demographic capture needed.
- Build on partnerships for long-term engagement program.

Overall, this was a highly productive community-based research initiative that delivered vital insights, forged valuable collaborations, and drove greater patient focus among regional health systems. Recommendations provided can guide medical improvements and health policy over the long term. Further engagement and evaluative efforts will track progress toward more equitable access to care.

## Acknowledgements

Healthwatch East Riding of Yorkshire would like to express their appreciation to both Jo from Cherry Tree and Angela from Love Driffield for their continued support throughout the partnership. We would also like to thank all of the volunteers at Love Driffield for being so welcoming, and to every person who took the time to share their experiences.

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