



Strengthening Community Choice

Voucher Program

Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as Australia's First Nations people and the Traditional Custodians whose cultures and customs have nurtured and continue to nurture this land, since the Dreamtime. We pay our respects to the local Wadawurrung people, their Elders, past, present, and emerging.



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Thanks and Appreciation

In delivering this project, we'd like to acknowledge the Give Where You Live Foundation and our Project Champion Sally Edgerton for their partnership, insights and connections to the organisations involved in the Community Choice Voucher Program.

Special thanks to our Project Mentor, the Committee for Geelong, Leadership Portfolio Partners, and Scholarship Providers for their support.

The Leaders for Geelong Program is made possible through the support of our generous Program Partners and Scholarship Providers.

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Our Team



Gabrielle Peacock

Director, Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Unit, Barwon Health

Gabrielle is a healthcare leader with experience across clinical, operational, and strategic roles. Grounded in her nursing background, her career has been shaped by a commitment to people-centred care and creating environments where both staff and patients can thrive. Gabrielle leads the Nursing and Midwifery Workforce Unit at Barwon Health focusing on workforce sustainability. Having lived and worked in the Geelong and Surf Coast regions for much of her career, Gabrielle was drawn to the Community Choice project through her belief in locally led initiatives that promote dignity, belonging, and equity. She sees Community Choice as an inspiring example of how respectful support models can adapt to changing needs while building resilience across the G21 region.



Hinal Merchant

Director Finance Transformation, National Disability Insurance Agency

Hinal brings over two decades of experience in financial management, strategic governance, and organisational transformation across international banking, not-for-profit, and government sectors. Hinal has grown up in the city of Muscat, Oman. As a committed resident of Geelong, Hinal is invested in the city's future. By advocating for small business support, investing in education and skills development, and promoting diversity and inclusion, Hinal envisions a vibrant, resilient economy where everyone can thrive. Hinal's leadership focus is on aligning economic progress with equity, ensuring opportunities for marginalized groups and future generations.



Laura Mojsiej

Portfolio Manager/Head of Discipline, Nursing, Pathology and Short Courses, The Gordon

Laura is an experienced health and education leader, currently serving as the Portfolio Manager for several health-related educational qualifications at The Gordon. With over 30 years of connection to the Geelong region, Laura is deeply committed to advancing health and education outcomes that strengthen both individuals and the wider community. Laura's career reflects a dual passion for nursing and education, demonstrated through her clinical nursing role within the Geelong region and leadership role at The Gordon as well as through volunteer involvement in local initiatives such as GAWs, primary school reading programs and most recently with Give Where You Live. Laura is particularly passionate about building community connections, strengthening resilience and fostering opportunities that enables others to grow, adapt and thrive which is what drew her to the Community Choice project.



Michael Minney

Acting Branch Manager, Audit, National Disability Insurance Agency

Michael has spent the last 8 years working in risk and audit roles at the NDIA to improve processes that will better support people in the community with disability. Michael grew up in a small regional town where many residents are reliant on government and other support to cover daily living expenses. Michael is passionate about seeing dignity-based support models like Community Choice sustained and was drawn to the project as an opportunity that aligned with his core values of supporting your local community respectfully.



Foreword

The Give Where You Live Foundation is proud to be working with the Committee for Geelong's 2025 Leaders for Geelong Program.

Since its establishment in 1954, the Foundation has worked in partnership with the people of Geelong to support those most in need in our community.

In the early 1990s, following the collapse of the Pyramid Building Society and the significant financial hardship it created for so many in our community, the Foundation began delivering emergency relief vouchers to help people access basic necessities such as food, household items, and essential prescriptions.

In 2021, in response to another community crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, and with the support of the State Government, the Foundation expanded and strengthened this program into what is now the Community Choice Voucher Program. Developed in collaboration with software partner OK200, we created a custom voucher generation and redemption platform that not only enables local community service agencies to provide simple, effective, and dignified emergency relief, but also captures valuable data to give unique insights into the challenges facing our community.

Today, we partner with 30 local community service organisations, which includes emergency relief providers, neighbourhood houses, youth and family services, employment and training providers and mental health services, who distribute vouchers directly to individuals and families.

We designed the Community Choice program to uphold dignity and autonomy. The credit card sized vouchers can be redeemed at a range of locations and times of the day across the Geelong region.

They provide access to food from [Geelong Foodshare](#) and local cafes, support with the concession gap payment for prescription medications across 17 local pharmacies, and material aid for household items, from the [Junk Group](#). In doing so, the program not only gives people choice of the type of support they receive, but also stimulates our local economy.

This initiative is a true example of collaboration, in bringing together community service organisations, local businesses and the wider community to respond to urgent needs, while investing back into our community.

We are deeply grateful to the Leaders for Geelong group for supporting this project, who have helped provide new insights to support the Community Choice Voucher Program.

Gabrielle, Michael, Laura, and Hinal have provided valuable data analysis to help us identify opportunities to grow and engage more food businesses in the program. Just as the leaders who came together in 1954 to form the Foundation, they are demonstrating vision and dedication through their work on this project. I would like to extend my thanks for their commitment to this important project.

Finally, I want to extend my thanks to all the agencies and businesses involved in the Community Choice Voucher Program. Together, you are helping to create a fairer Geelong and making a difference in the lives of so many people in our community.

Zac Lewis
CEO
Give Where You Live Foundation

“Community Choice puts dignity, autonomy, and choice into emergency relief—empowering people in crisis to make decisions about what they need.”

Executive Summary

The *Strengthening and Futureproofing Community Choice* project, was delivered as part of the 2025 Leaders for Geelong program in partnership with the Give Where You Live (GWYL) Foundation.

The Project

The project focused on ensuring the sustainability and growth of the Community Choice Voucher Program, a dignity-based food relief initiative that empowers people to access food and essentials in a discreet, respectful way. Unlike other food relief schemes where donated food is provided to individuals and families, Community Choice enables individuals to use voucher cards to choose their own food and essentials at participating cafés, grocery stores, and pharmacies. This offers both choice, dignity and a sense of belonging.

The Program Needs

Community Choice currently supports more than 13,000 people annually. However, rising cost-of-living pressures and shifting demographics have increased demand on Community Choice vouchers to provide more support to existing voucher users and to a broader cohort of users. This includes more families, older adults, students, and people from culturally diverse communities (source: GWYL Impact Report 2023 to 2024).

The Findings

Through stakeholder engagement and data analysis, our project explored how the Community Choice Voucher Program could be future-proofed through a marketing strategy and supporting materials. The strategy and materials should highlight both the areas of increased demand and the additional benefits created by dignity-based programs. Our analysis revealed that participating businesses value the program's alignment with their own community ethos and that users appreciate the discretion and dignity it affords. It also identified the diverse challenges faced by users of vouchers at different businesses (cafes, Foodshare and pharmacies). Analysis highlighted gaps in the geographic coverage of the program, data capture, and public awareness.

The Deliverables

The project team produced practical tools to support program growth including:

- A heatmap showing the postcode location of voucher users and current cafés. This can be updated by GWYL as the program expands.
- A clear and concise marketing brochure, designed as a plain language infographic for quick data digestion by busy café owners.

Additional recommendations centre on three strategic priorities:

- Marketing strategically to meet the current demands of the program, in particular the emerging areas where voucher users live and marketing specifically to stakeholders including donors, cafés, voucher users.
- Improving data collection and analysis to inform direction. This includes improving the quality and consistency of data collected and using data to better understand demands on the program.
- Expanding partnerships strategically to fill gaps and build resilience without overextension.

The Conclusion

Community Choice is a values-aligned, well-regarded program that provides dignity and connection in times of hardship. With careful evolution, it can scale its impact and serve as a leading model of food relief across Australia.



Background

Since the early 1990s, GWYL has been delivering an emergency relief food voucher program. With support from the local community, through the Feed Geelong Appeal, the Percy Baxter Foundation, the Shine On Foundation, and the Dawn Wade Foundation. The Community Choice Voucher Program has been supporting over 13,000 locals each year.

In recent years, the program has seen a shift in both demand and demographics. Rising living costs have driven increased demand for support, particularly among families (in 2024, 4,675 of 13,258 people supported were children), older adults and culturally diverse communities (*source: GWYL Impact Report 2023 to 2024*). This is in addition to existing cohorts who need more support than before. Using a voucher system comprised of a discrete voucher card (similar in size and shape to a bank or credit card) and a unique QR code, participants can redeem vouchers for groceries and meals at local cafés and businesses. The discrete system enables people to access support in a dignified way and with choice, agency, and connection.

GWYL recently commenced reporting on the impact of the program. In 2023 and 2024 this focused on summarising the key challenges faced by people using vouchers and key demographics of voucher users. The 2024 reporting included comparison with 2023. GWYL provides this data and stories on its website and to agencies who distribute vouchers. This information and key data insight had not been historically issued to cafes and local participating businesses.



Project Purpose



The purpose of our project was to identify and develop ways to better market the Community Choice Voucher Program to attract:

- more cafes to participate in emerging areas of need (new locations and cohorts)
- additional funding to grow the program

Growing the program in emerging areas requires funding for more vouchers to support people in emerging areas and local supporting café businesses to participate in these emerging areas. This is crucial to ensure all individuals and families facing food insecurity are empowered to access food with choice and dignity.

The project team has developed a simple tool that maps where voucher users live to the location of current participating cafes. This identifies current coverage and opportunities for growth. The map is supported with user guidance for updating the tool to ensure that it remains current as user demographics change and additional cafes are onboarded.



“Joining Community Choice aligns with your values, strengthens local economies, and fosters inclusive community connection.”

Timelines and Milestones

Scoping

(April to May 2025)

- Engagement with GWYL to understand requirements and define the scope of the project.

Research and Stakeholder Engagement

(May to July 2025)

- Research and engagement to understand the data supporting demand and use of Community Choice vouchers.
- Engagement with Ok200 (developer of software supporting voucher use and data collection) to identify capabilities, opportunities and challenges of existing software supporting the program.
- Engagement with key stakeholders including participating cafés, agencies issuing vouchers and Geelong Foodshare (where most vouchers are redeemed)

Analysis and validation

(July to August 2025)

- Analysis of program demand and usage data.
- Analysis of stakeholder engagement insights and trends.
- Showcase findings and initial recommendations to GWYL.

Development of marketing materials

(August 2025)

- Agree final deliverables under the project.
- Develop map and brochure for growing Community Choice.
- Showcase, test and refine map and brochure with GWYL.
- Develop how to guide on using and updating the map and brochure for future marketing use.

Reporting and presentation

(August to October 2025)

- Presentation of findings.
- Finalisation of report and toolkit.
- Final project presentation.

“We were drawn to the Community Choice Voucher Program project because it’s a transformative initiative that adapts to changing needs while empowering local communities to flourish through supportive and inclusive means.”

Project Approach



The approach by the team to deliver this project included the following methods.

Research and Information Gathering

This phase aimed to understand the current program, voucher usage and opportunities for futureproofing. This included:

- Engagement with GWYL staff responsible for the program
- Interviews with cafes and agencies who distribute vouchers
- Analysis of data collected on voucher use, including data published in GWYL reports
- Interview with owners of the data capture system used to manage the program to assess technical capabilities for growth
- Participation in stakeholder events (e.g. Foodshare visit)

Identify and Test Options

Based on information collected through research, the team developed potential ideas to strengthen the program and tested these ideas with GWYL. This included:

- Growing the program through options for involvement in complementary programs with existing partners such as Foodshare meals and 'Pay-it-forward' models used in Cafes
- Using existing data on program coverage and service gaps to direct marketing efforts
- Creating new marketing tools to support promotion
- Adjusting data collection to align with any new approaches.

Developing Deliverables for GWYL

Following validation of suitable ideas, the team focused on developing targeting marketing materials to target growth in priority areas. This involved:

- Documenting the target markets (café, funders, people who use vouchers) and strategy to market to each market with new marketing tools
- Developing a coverage map to support discussions with potential cafes and funders
- Developing a brochure that brings together program coverage, user needs and positive human stories of the program success. The brochure serves as a call to action.
- Developing a guide to regularly review data to identify, and where necessary update the coverage map and target service areas, making the deliverables sustainable into the future.

Findings and Deliverables

Engagement with community groups involved in the Community Choice Voucher Program and analysis of voucher use identified common themes to inform what the project team delivered.

Theme 1: Positive Community Values

- **Aligned values drives involvement:** Cafés get involved and stay because of aligned values. Local business owners want to give back and love the relationships it fosters.
- **Positive value:** Community Choice is a loved and respected program. Having choice with cafes and pharmacies is niche, but these offerings support people experiencing varied challenges and provide more value than just the cost of a meal. They provide a human experience where people can connect socially within the community and there is an opportunity to highlight this value.

Source: Interviews with cafes (2025)

Theme 2: Program Management Opportunities

- **Marketing gaps:** Existing marketing artefacts focus on how to use the program and not on program growth. Additionally, café owners identified opportunities for more promotion on the choice available in the program, as many voucher users may not be aware that they can use vouchers in cafes, or the available cafes.
- **Inconsistent data capture:** The data capture platform is new to the program and has set the program up well for data driven decision making. However, data capture by agencies is inconsistent and this impacts the data quality and the insights available for positive change.

Source: Interviews with cafes and agencies (2025)

It is noted that:

1. agencies focus on working with the individual or family to understand their situation and what supports are required and may be available. This means data collection may not be a priority.
2. agencies may also have staffing pressures and are often reliant on volunteers to deliver their programs.
3. GWYL is planning to provide improved guidance for capturing data on Community Choice vouchers.



Theme 3: Voucher Use

Voucher users home address

Analysis of voucher users by postcode of residence identified that the need for food support across Geelong is broader than the previously known areas in central and north Geelong.

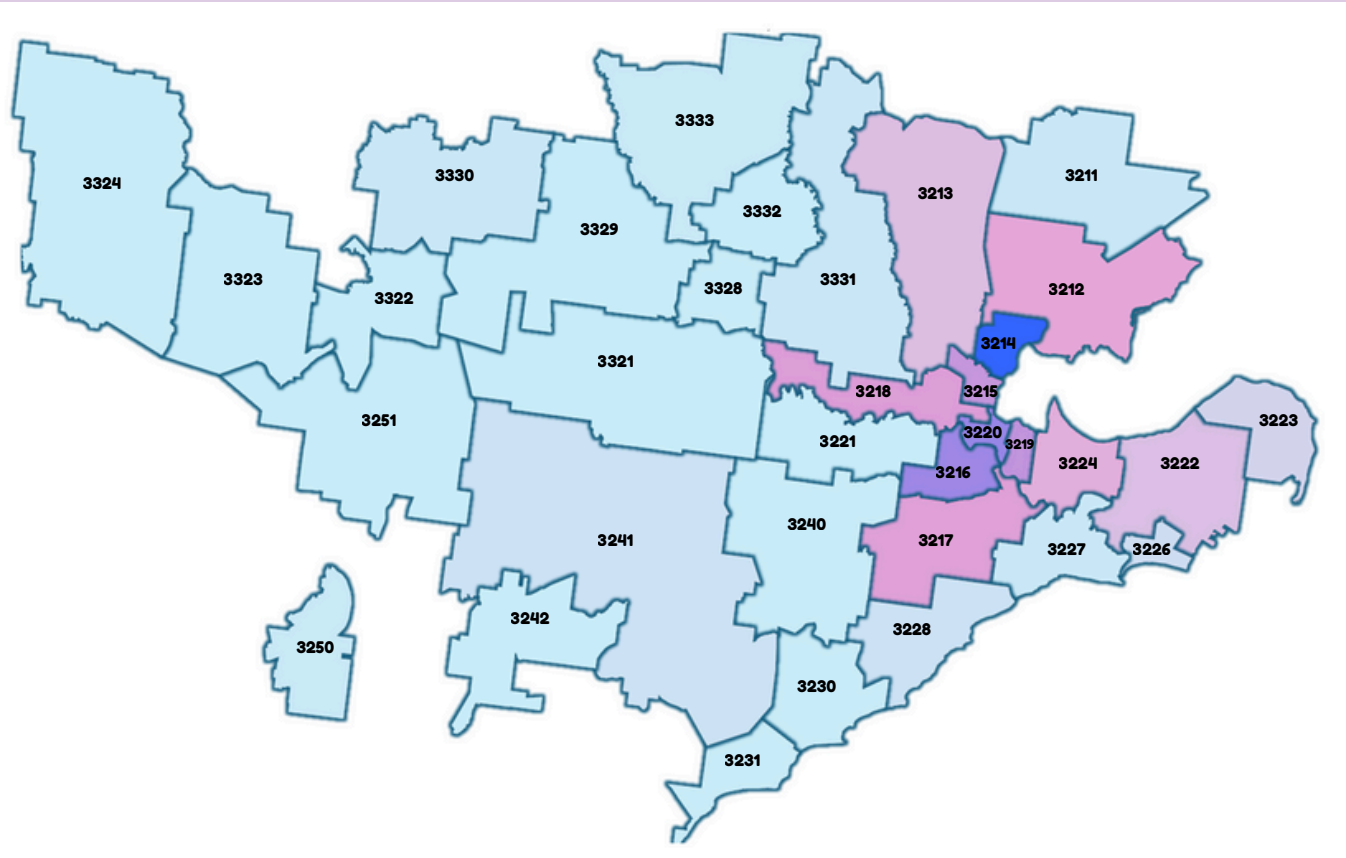


Figure 1. Heat map of Community Choice voucher users by postcode (home address)

Theme 3: Voucher Use

Local Cafes Participating in the Program

Mapping of local businesses in the program highlighted that many areas of Geelong are not well serviced.

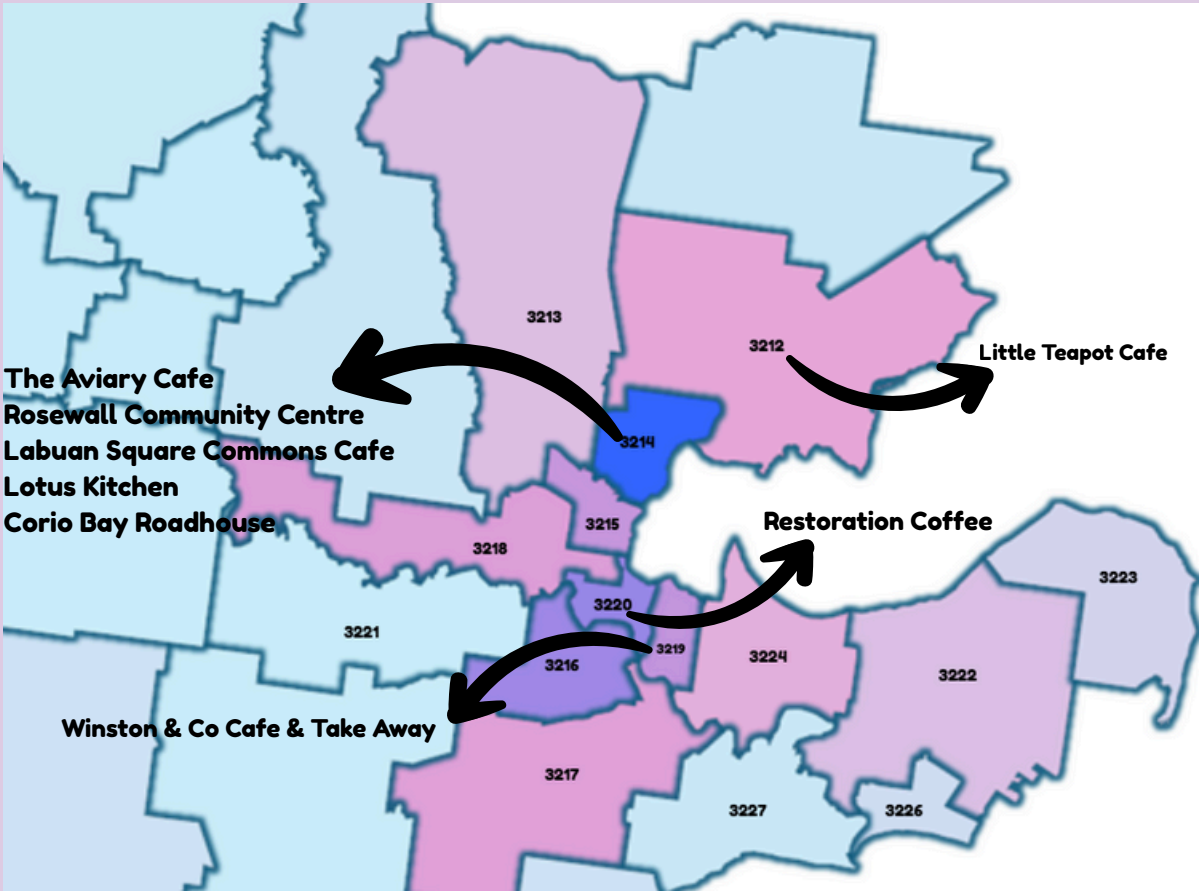


Figure 2. Heat map of Community Choice voucher users including Cafe availability

Theme 4: Voucher Use Challenges

- **Diverse users different needs:** Rough sleepers, families, students, the elderly and those in crisis all use the program differently.
 - Some people who need vouchers also need other complex supports
 - Some people can just cover basics such as rent and power, but need support for food or dignified choice
 - Some people can just cover costs for their family (e.g. children), but they may need assistance for their own costs (health / pharmaceuticals)
 - While cost of living pressures are the key focus for users of Geelong Foodshare and pharmacy vouchers, there is a more even spread of challenges for café voucher users including health issues, bereavement, unplanned large bills, family violence and others. Cafes provide more than just food, they provide a sense of wellbeing and connection in the community. This is important for mental health and wellbeing in tough times, without impacting their dignity.
- **Barriers to use:** For some people facing financial difficulties or food insecurity for the first time, there is a guilt and stigma that prevents them from entering agencies or business for support. When supports offer dignified choice, there needs to be discrete options (like the Community Choice voucher card).
- **Access to food (location):** When seeking food assistance, there are limitations with accessing some locations. Examples include Geelong Foodshare being in only two locations and not all areas with voucher users having participating cafes nearby. For people with financial challenges, travel to access these locations is another cost.
- **Insufficient vouchers for need:** Increased cost of living means more people need support for the first time and some people need more support than previously. However, current funding means the distribution of vouchers at some agencies needs to be rationed and decisions made on who receives the vouchers.



Theme 5: Varied Challenges Faced by Café Voucher Users

When Community Choice vouchers are issued, data is collected on the key challenges the individual / families are experiencing. The increased cost of living has been a key challenge impacting demand across all voucher users since 2024 and within Community Choice, cost of living was identified as:

- equal second highest key challenge faced by café voucher users (17% - refer figure 2)
- highest key challenge faced by Foodshare voucher users (82% - refer figure 3)
- highest key challenge faced by pharmacy voucher users (71% - refer figure 4)

However, it is noted that the broader range of challenges faced by voucher users is more present in café users (when compared to Foodshare and pharmacy where cost of living account for the majority). As shown in figure 2, being ineligible for government benefits (21%) was the most common listed challenge, health issues and bereavement (17%) was equal second with cost of living. Other factors including unemployment (12%), unplanned or large bills (7%) and family violence (6%) were as prevalent as the second most common challenge for other vouchers (homeless, which accounted for 5% of Foodshare and 8% of pharmacy).

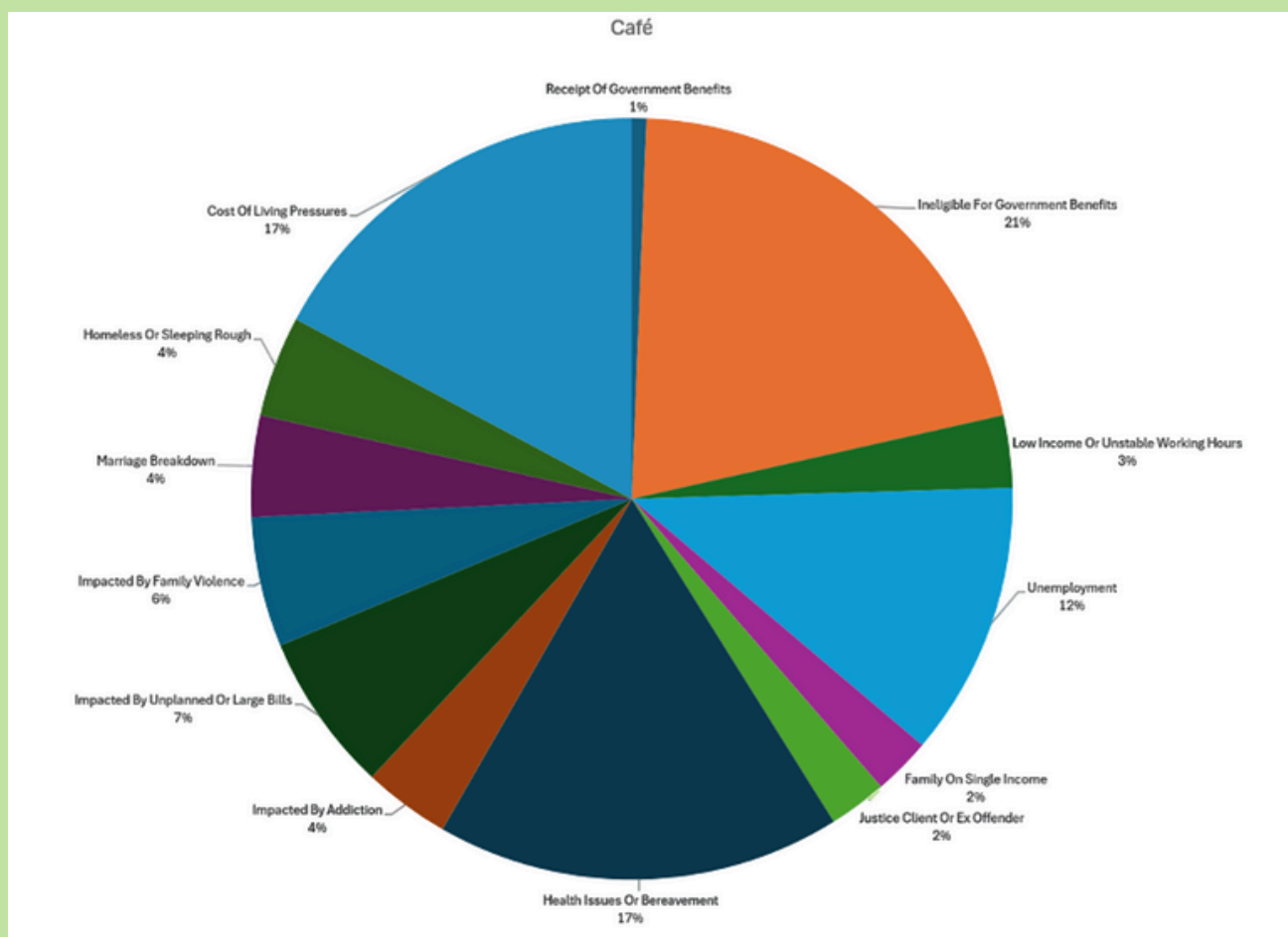


Figure 3. Challenges faced by café voucher users

Source: Analysis of GWYL Community Choice Voucher use 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025

Figure 4. Challenges faced by Foodshare voucher users

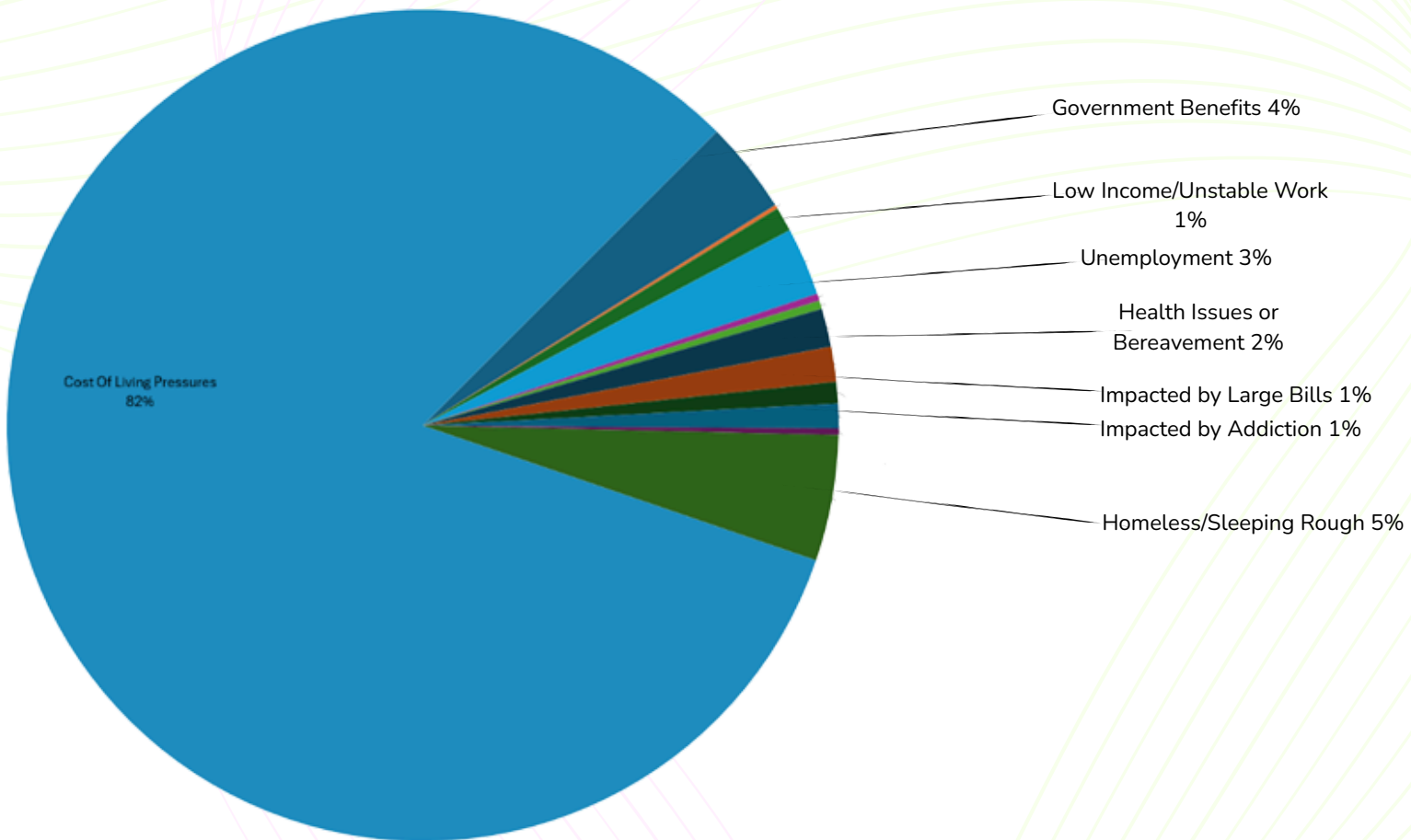
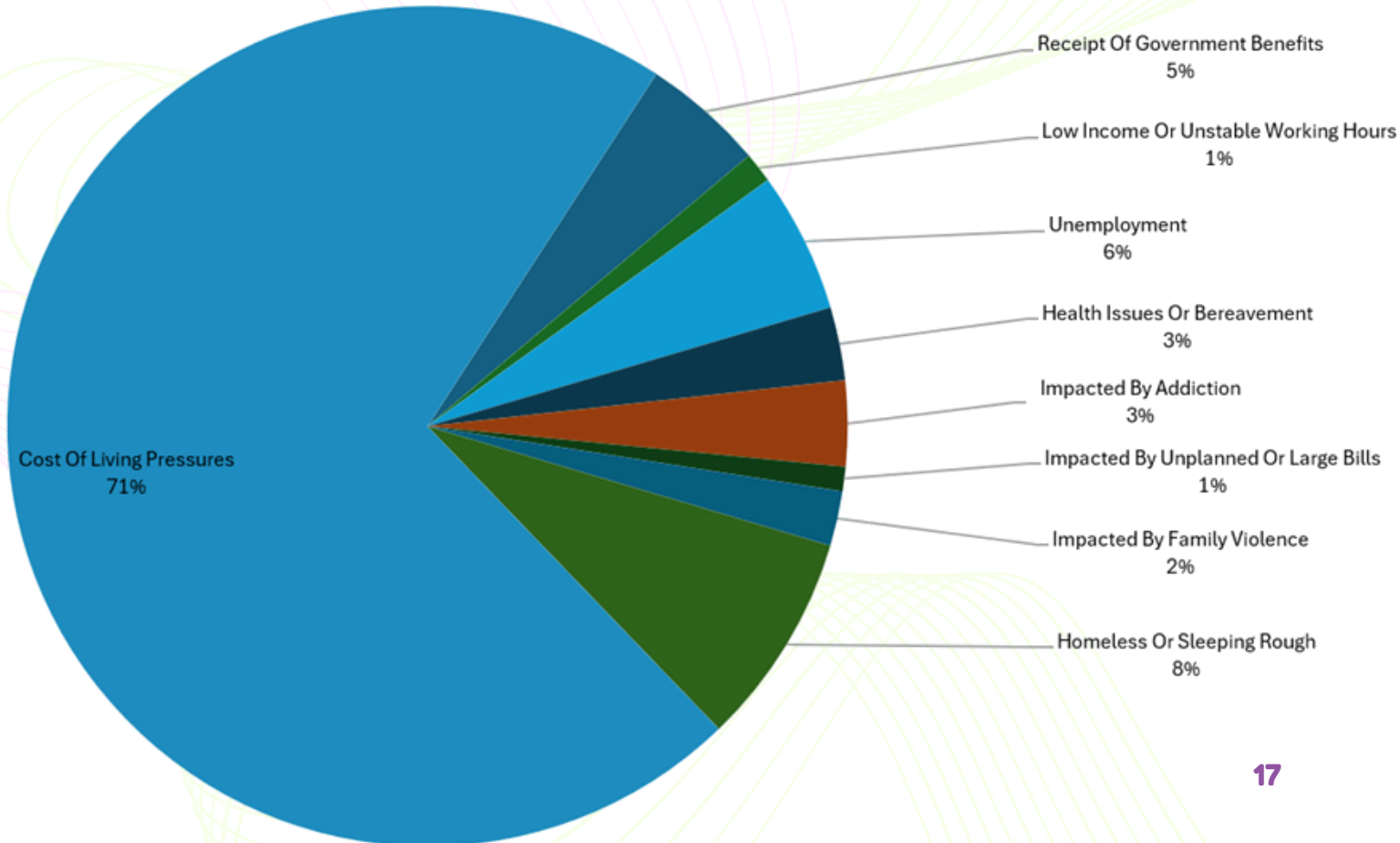


Figure 5. Challenges faced by pharmacy voucher users



Deliverables – Marketing

The objective of the Community Choice marketing strategy is to increase community partnerships within the program through increased funding from the community, donors, corporate partners and grants. To achieve this, the strategy spotlights how it respectfully empowers individuals and families with choice in how and where they receive food assistance, provides dignity and a human story.

Target Audiences

When applied with appropriate marketing tools, the strategy should reach the following three target audiences.

- **Corporate/community funders:** Encourage businesses and donors to fund locally by highlighting both the community need, and the importance of funding dignity-based programs.
- **Local businesses (program participation):** Encourage local businesses to become involved in supporting their community, by highlighting how they can join in and assist where there is an identified need.
- **Voucher users:** Promote the level of choice available to participants, highlighting opportunities to use the vouchers.

Key Messages

- “Community Choice puts dignity, autonomy, and choice into emergency relief—empowering people in crisis to make decisions about what they need.”
- “Community Choice supports people in their everyday lives, not just food parcels, but dignity, local commerce, accessibility and choice.”
- “Offering choice and dignity supports people facing complex challenges that are broader than just the cost of living and are often coupled with health issues, bereavement, and family violence”
- “Joining Community Choice aligns with your values, strengthens local economies, and fosters inclusive community connection.”
- “It’s simple to join, low administration, high alignment with social values—and your venue becomes a safe, welcome space.”
- “Your support multiplies impact—\$200K serves over 10,000 people annually.”

Channels and Tactics



Target Audience Pitch (new) Brochure Map (new)

For each of the three target audiences, a pitch, using the brochure map, has been developed as follows:

Corporate / community donors

- Support your local community by funding a dignity-based food relief program (GWYL to add new story annually). Donations enable GWYL to onboard a new café. Current cost-of-living has increased the need for support to a wider group of individuals and families in the community. A small donation of \$150 can support a family with 6 Community Choice vouchers.
- Your support will enable the program to grow with more participating businesses located where vouchers live (refer brochure map)

Cafes/ participating businesses

- Join the program to support your need of locals in your suburb
- Joining only requires a commitment to supporting those in your community with need. The Community Choice Voucher Program (add story of café) covers food costs.
- Your involvement can uplift those in your community who are currently facing financial challenges (GWYL to add new story annually).

A heatmap of the Geelong region combining where people who hold vouchers live with current business supporting the program. This will also:

- Highlight areas where there is a need for additional supporting businesses
- Narrative on positive impact the program has on people in the community
- Key statistics
- A call to action

Existing and Other

Store sticker (existing): Simple sign to show a business participants in the program

Website (existing): Community Choice Voucher Program landing page with details on impact statistics, merchant map (with pictograph of voucher usability), participant stories, and a call to join or support via an online expression of interest form.

Email campaigns: segmented for agencies, businesses, donors—highlight local stories, recent expansion (e.g. Bannockburn), and easy next steps.

Social media: Highlighting positive stories of the program including participant stories, new and existing businesses supporting the program, expansion of program into new areas of need.

GWYL campaigns: leverage Pitch Up Geelong and Conversations That Matter for promotion, use existing cafés in promotion / as partners for Surf Coast Trek

Merchant open-house or workshop: invite existing café/pharmacy partners to share experiences with potential new participants.

Source: GWYL



Evaluation and Reporting

Evaluation of the impact of the marketing strategy, in addition to other activities, could include monitoring of the following metrics:

- uplift in number of new cafés and local businesses onboarded to the program over a period of 12 months (compare to periods as a baseline)
- increase in funding (\$ and number of contributors) provided to support Community Choice
- increase in localised use of vouchers.

“Offering choice and dignity supports people facing complex challenges that are broader than just the cost of living and are often coupled with health issues, bereavement, and family violence.”



Opportunities and Recommendations

Opportunity 1: Marketing to Meet Program Demands

There is insufficient funding to meet the current demand for Community Choice vouchers. Stakeholder discussions identified that agencies distributing vouchers could issue more vouchers to people who demonstrate need, however there are not enough vouchers.

There are also not enough participating cafes or businesses in areas where voucher holders live. This means people need to travel, which can be a barrier (additional cost) for some people. Stakeholder discussions also indicated that with changes in the profile of people requiring assistance (e.g. new migrants, CALD), there is a need for more participating businesses that cater for these needs

Recommendation 1a

In promoting the Community Choice Program, GWYL should implement a marketing strategy that:

- consistently leverages its offering as a dignified approach offering choice with vouchers
- sells the story of need and a dignified response to attract new donors
- sells the story of regional and cultural demand to attract new businesses in the relevant areas and to attract government funding (relevant programs)
- provides context on voucher user profiles so cafés can identify with the locals in the community they would be supporting.

The deliverables of this project provide both a data analysis tool and marketing brochure to support implementation of recommendation 1.

Recommendation 1b

Provide time and resources to periodically update tools and materials to be current and relevant. This includes:

- refreshing user coverage maps to include new cafés / participating businesses and voucher user locations. This should be completed with current data periodically using the tool provided
- updating user stories / personas to reflect emerging / common users (e.g. stories should reflect the emerging CALD and younger people groups. Stories to attract new cafés should reflect the broader challenges faced by café voucher users (which currently include ineligibility for government benefits, health issues and bereavement)
- updating key challenges being faced by users (all redemptions).

Recommendation 1c

Consider options to incorporate QR codes into marketing brochures to improve the call to action. The QR code could link to a form with information and / or to sign up as a local business / café participating in the program.

Opportunity 2: Continuous Improvement of Data Collection and Analysis

Existing reporting provided data on the overall insights and impacts of the program. This included who was seeking and using vouchers as a whole and what had been the key changes between the 2023 and 2024 calendar year. The mapping of users by postcodes identified both gaps in data collection and opportunities to leverage data for more detailed and targeted use. It was noted during stakeholder discussions that data input on Community Choice vouchers may not always be completed in a timely or consistent manner.

The key deliverable for this project focused on the locality of voucher users and did not cover location of other stakeholders including agencies that distribute vouchers or pharmacies where vouchers are also used.

Recommendation 2a

GWYL should review the current process for collecting data, including data points for Community Choice and consider:

- making certain fields (such as key challenges and suburb) mandatory fields for agencies to complete
- consider whether some fields could be removed and completed by the system (e.g. only collect the suburb and let the system map this to the postcode).

Recommendation 2b

Based on the output from recommendation 2a:

- work with OK200 (data system provider) and agencies (who collect data) to ensure there is a collective understanding of how the data collection helps inform future program direction (the map will support the benefit collecting data brings)
- develop new guidance, including videos on demand on how to complete Community Choice Voucher Program forms.

Recommendation 2c

Using the coverage tool and guidance for updating user locations, GWYL should consider:

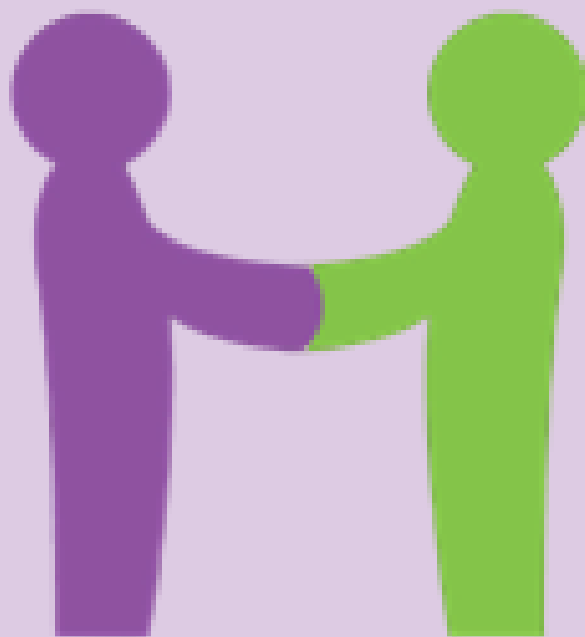
- developing similar maps for agencies and pharmacies
- developing maps based on challenges voucher users face and cohorts
- overlaying maps to assess coverage of agencies and pharmacies, and to assess the current transport impacts that the program may have on voucher users.

Opportunity 3: Expanded offering

Stakeholder discussions identified potential challenges that voucher users may have in certain circumstances. Examples cited include travel to Geelong Foodshare (which has two locations in the Geelong CBD and North Geelong) and the value at cafes, when compared to Geelong Foodshare.

Recommendation 3a

GWYL could consider investigating options to partner within the program. As cafes are already required to meet Food Standards to operate, consider investigating the feasibility of partnering Foodshare with participating cafés for local distribution of ready to go meals.



Challenges and Limitations

Undertaking The Project

Timing constraints

The Strengthening and Futureproofing Community Choice Voucher project was undertaken as part of the Leaders for Geelong program. With a limited window of time to undertake engagement and analysis, there was a limit on:

- volume and depth of stakeholder engagement
- capacity to test, revise and re-test ideas
- reviewing and interpreting data analysis

Data gathering and insights constraints

The Community Choice Program includes several stakeholders comprising of GWYL, funders, agencies who distribute vouchers, local businesses that accept vouchers and voucher users. Across the groups:

- although agencies may have personal details of voucher users, these are not collected for the Community Choice Voucher Program. This project did not have details of voucher users to seek direct input about using vouchers or the program. Instead insights were obtained from feedback collected from voucher users from prior work and indirectly from the agencies and businesses they interact with
- four (4) of the 15 agencies who distribute vouchers were engaged. This included Uniting Vic Tas Ltd. who distribute the most vouchers in the program

- three (3) of the 9 existing cafes were available to meet. It is noted that some cafés were unavailable, one declined to meet as they hadn't redeemed many café vouchers, and one café had recently ceased being a café (due to staffing issues)
- two (2) of the 3 suppliers of fresh food were available to meet.

Data analysis was undertaken based on data collected in OK200's system. This data is entered by agency staff and when QR codes are scanned at participating cafes. However, in undertaking analysis it was found that:

- Agency staff manually and sometimes inconsistently enter data
- data on user suburb or postcode is not always collected or able to be collected due to the nature of frontline support provided (approximately 15% of the dataset requires an assumption)
- Insight on café use was limited to 163 vouchers in the 2024-25 financial year
- data privacy limits depth of demographic analysis.

Project Team Reflection and Conclusion

This project deepened our understanding of food insecurity, dignity-based approaches, and the power of local partnerships. The strength of the Community Choice Program lies not just in meals, but in connection, trust, and hope.

We learned there is great value in listening deeply, and adapting to stakeholder needs and that where data is available it can support and validate learnings.

We learned in most projects, there will be limitations and challenges with time and available information, and that progress requires clear and regular communication with project sponsors and between the team.

The Community Choice Program is a locally grown, values-aligned initiative that brings dignity, choice, and belonging to people in crisis. With thoughtful evolution, especially in data, marketing, and engagement, it has the potential to scale its impact and serve as a model for other regions. We are proud to have contributed to its journey.

**“That is the dignity of choice.
And that is the quiet but
powerful impact of this
program.”**

References / Reading List

- GWYL Community Choice Voucher use data 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025
- Interviews with café and agency partners (2025)
- Give Where You Live Impact Reports (2023–2024)
- Foodbank Hunger Report <https://reports.foodbank.org.au/foodbank-hunger-report-2024> (accessed July 2025)
- G21 Region Food Security Profile
- City of Greater Geelong Homelessness Data Snapshot

Appendices

- Brochure

Appendices

Brochure

Support when and where it's needed most.

Maria 67, Pensioner:
"It doesn't make me feel like I'm different. I can sit down, enjoy my meal, and feel part of the community."

Aisha 15, Student:
"It's just like tapping a card. Nobody has to know I'm struggling."

Peter 45, Recently Unemployed:
"I don't feel labelled. I'm treated the same as every other customer, and that means a lot when you're already feeling low."

How it works

GIVE WHERE YOU LIVE FOUNDATION

Community Choice Voucher Program

A modern, community-driven approach to delivering emergency support when and where it is needed most

communitychoice@givewhereyoulive.com.au
 Phone 03 5229 4364

Factors Influencing Community Choice Voucher Use

Factor	Percentage
Receipt of Gov. Benefits	2%
Cost of Living Pressure	7%
Homeless/Close to Homeless	4%
Marriage Breakdown	4%
Family Violence	6%
Unemployment	12%
Family on Single Income	2%
Justice Court	2%
Health Issues/Disability	3.7%
Low Income/Unstable Work	26%
Ineligibility for Gov. Benefits	21%

