

# DIGNITY

ENDING HUNGER TOGETHER IN SCOTLAND

The Report of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty  
June 2016

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## Foreword

Like many others, I have been appalled by the regular reports of more and more people in our country needing to access foodbanks in order to get by. I know others who would rather go hungry than suffer the indignity of going to a foodbank and, they perceive, begging for food. I count it a privilege to know a few of them as friends. They are not people who are careless with money. They are people who do not have enough money in the first place.


It has been an immense privilege to chair the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty. It has been made up of an inspiring array of extraordinary people each, in their own way, doing their part to end the need for foodbanks in one of the richest countries in the world. This report is our shared work and it is not necessarily representative of the organisations that we come from. It is a testimony to the energy and commitment of the Group's members that they are willing, if asked, to continue to play a collective role in 'ending hunger together.'

Our report makes a number of recommendations relating to how the income of people living in food insecurity can be increased, the quality of food provision can be improved, while it is still required, and more transformative community food models can be established.

Running through our efforts are six core messages:

- The biggest problem is having enough money to feed yourself.
- Every response must be dignified.
- Involving people experiencing food insecurity is where we will find the solution.
- Everyone has the right to good quality and nutritious food.
- Food is about community and not just consumption.
- Emergency food aid is not a long term solution to hunger.

We look forward to discussing with Scottish Ministers how the proposals laid out in this report can be implemented. More importantly, we look forward to a time when together we will have ended hunger in Scotland.



Rev Dr Martin Johnstone  
Chair

## Executive Summary

This report sets out evidence and recommendations from the first six months' work of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty.

There is a good deal more work to be done by the Group – both collectively, and with the Scottish Government – to understand the pattern of food poverty and food insecurity in Scotland and to sharpen the measures proposed to tackle this decisively over the next decade.

However, action is needed now, and our recommendations focus on reducing and removing the need for foodbanks in the lifetime of the current Parliament and of transitioning to other models involving increasing income and developing community food initiatives. This is in line with Scotland's commitment to implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Goal 2.1:

By 2030, end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.

We recognise that many of the levers required to tackle food insecurity do not lie with the Scottish Government. Nonetheless, we would encourage it to do all within its powers to address the problems that we have outlined and the solutions that we advocate.

These recommendations are founded on the principles of dignity and inclusion. People with lived experience of food poverty must be at the heart of the change, and we must tackle food poverty in a way which enhances dignity and embodies respect.

We propose that our approach to food poverty and food insecurity in Scotland is based on a 'right to food' which is underpinned by law. In a wealthy 21<sup>st</sup> century nation, citizens should not have to rely on charity or on surplus food to feed themselves and their families.

We propose that food insecurity is measured more systematically in Scotland, as it is in many other countries, so that we can focus action more effectively and measure results over time.

We recognise that food poverty is a symptom of wider poverty and disadvantage, which in turn is embedded in the way we organise our society and our economy. We recommend implementing more widely the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation, together with better working conditions and a reduction in exploitative zero-hours contracts. We also propose that the Scottish Government uses its new powers to fund an increase in the value of social security benefits, specifically Child Benefit.

We want to see a reduction in the level of delays and punitive sanctions in the social security system, and measures to reduce other household costs including rent, energy and transport.

The Scottish Welfare Fund has provided an additional safety net for tens of thousands of households in the last two years, and we recommend this as the first point of call for people with an income crisis which leaves them unable to afford food.

Finally, we see a role for a stronger community food sector, which can embed the provision of food aid in a wider range of community activities and services, and encourage local authorities to work with others to develop community food plans.

## **Commitments**

In the report, we make a number of recommendations to others. However, we are also clear that success is dependent upon everyone taking up the challenge. So, amongst the commitments that we have made are:

- i. In our work we will seek to develop and deliver dignified responses to food insecurity and food poverty.
- ii. We will continue to challenge the stigma of poverty and raise awareness of the structural causes of food insecurity.
- iii. We commit to gathering, collating, analysing and sharing evidence of problems within social security delivery that are creating or exacerbating food insecurity and to constructively engage with social security delivery agencies to address those problems.

## Recommendations

1. The Independent Working Group on Food Poverty should continue to work in partnership to help deliver the recommendations in this report.

### **Dignity**

2. Any organisation which secures Scottish Government funding and support to work on tackling food poverty must demonstrate how its approach promotes dignity and is helping to transition away from emergency food aid as the primary response.

### **Understand**

3. The Scottish Government should explore how the right to food can be enshrined within Scots Law.
4. The Scottish Government should introduce and fund a robust system to measure food insecurity in Scotland, alongside wider measures of poverty.
5. The Scottish Government, having established reliable population data on household food insecurity, should set stretching targets to reduce it and explore how these could be integrated within the National Performance Framework.
6. The Scottish Government should lead in communicating clearly and consistently the causes of food insecurity as identified by research.

### **Prevent**

7. The Scottish Government should use all available devolved powers, including procurement rules, to ensure work is a reliable route out of poverty, including payment of the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation, and the promotion of decent work more widely.
8. The Scottish Government should use new social security powers to improve the value of social security support, initially prioritising households with children through a top up to Child Benefit.
9. The Scottish Government and local authorities should prioritise investment in benefits advice and information services in order to maximise people's incomes and should carry out a review to enhance the quality of the service provided.

10. The Scottish Government should ensure key stakeholders, especially those with direct experience of the social security system, are fully involved in consultation on the forthcoming Scottish Social Security Bill, the development of the new Social Security Agency, and the creation of its new employment programmes.
11. The Scottish Government should continue to make strong representation to the UK Government with a view to reducing the risk of sanctions, maladministration, error and delay in the UK benefits system.
12. The Scottish Government and local authorities should use all available devolved powers to reduce the costs for energy, rent, transport and the school day for low income households.
13. The Scottish Government and local authorities should prioritise investment in healthy meals at school, and further explore the potential for providing healthy meals as part of school holiday programmes.

## **Respond**

14. The Scottish Government, along with local authorities and all those responding to acute food insecurity, should ensure widespread use of the Scottish Welfare Fund as the first port of call for emergency support and ensure the Fund is administered in a way that allows this.
15. If demand for the Scottish Welfare Fund grows, the Scottish Government should increase investment in it accordingly.
16. Community food providers (including those providing food in an emergency) should work together to improve the quality of the food provided and create opportunities to enable the sharing of meals, the provision of choice, and culturally appropriate nutritious foods.

## **Invest**

17. The social enterprise and community sector should continue the development of community food hubs across Scotland, supported by the recently expanded Fair Food Fund.
18. The Scottish Government, assisted by the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty, should work with non-government donors to increase the capacity of funding and expertise to tackle food insecurity.
19. Local authorities should work with others including those with lived experience of food poverty to develop and implement Community Food Plans, of which a central element should be reducing food insecurity and hunger.

## Remit & Membership

### Remit

The previous Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Communities and Pensioners' Rights, Alex Neil MSP, invited Martin Johnstone, Secretary of the Church of Scotland's Church & Society Council, to chair an independent short life working group on food poverty to consider the issues and make recommendations to the Scottish Government on future actions. The group was asked by the Cabinet Secretary to consider:

- How best to create a dignified and sustained food strategy which supports vulnerable people.
- How best to address the often complex set of issues which lead people into food poverty.
- How a strong partnership approach to eradicating food poverty can be developed and how collective resources and assets can be best aligned.

### Membership of the Independent Working Group

Martin Johnstone, Church of Scotland (Chair of the Group)

John Dickie, Child Poverty Action Group

Ewan Gurr, Trussell Trust

Lynn Hendry, STV Appeal

Lesley Hinds, City of Edinburgh Council (Local Authority Representation)

Peter Kelly, Poverty Alliance

Gillian Kynoch, Fareshare

Jamie Livingstone, Oxfam

Lesley MacDonald, The Robertson Trust

Mary Anne Macleod, Poverty Alliance

Tricia McConalogue, Bridging the Gap

Caroline Mockford, Poverty Truth Commission/Food Commission

Pete Ritchie, Nourish

Carolyn Sawers, Big Lottery

Cath Wallace, Poverty Truth Commission

Allan Young, Poverty Truth Commission



*'It is choosing  
between feeding  
your family or  
heating your home.'*

*'It's not eating for  
days.'*

*'It is eating stuff that  
fills you rather than  
food that is good for  
you.'*

*'It is cooking cheap  
food in the  
microwave because  
you can't afford to  
use the oven.'*

Quotes from Poverty Truth Commissioners about experiencing food poverty

## Definitions

A variety of definitions are frequently used to describe food poverty, hunger and food insecurity.

In this report we seek to use the term 'food insecurity' to describe the broad phenomenon when people are worried about not having enough food for themselves and their families. We use the term 'food poverty' (or 'hunger') to describe the more extreme, but sadly not unusual, occasions when lack of food results in people going hungry because of a lack of resources.

We have accepted the most widely used definition of food poverty by Professor Elizabeth Dowler (2003) which states: "food poverty is the inability to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food that is useful for health in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so."<sup>1</sup>

This definition recognises the importance of being able to participate in ways of accessing food which are common to a society and of being free from anxiety about a future ability to do this.

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<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Dowler, "Food and Poverty in Britain: Rights and Responsibilities", in: E Dowler & C Jones Finer (eds) "The Welfare of Food: rights and responsibilities in a changing world", Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, pp 140-159 (2003).

## Introduction

Fresh, nutritious food and a positive environment in which to eat it is a basic right which all of us should enjoy. That this is not the case for so many in Scotland is unacceptable and, together, we must address this.

There is nothing inevitable about the rising tide of hunger and food insecurity in Scotland. Its growth over the last few years should shock and shame us all. We should recognise its immense cost, not just on those who suffer most acutely but upon all of us.

It is not enough to talk about food insecurity. We need to end hunger in Scotland and to set a timescale for doing so. We believe that it is possible to end the need for foodbanks during this Parliament and this report sets out some of the ways in which we believe that can and must happen. We recognise that tackling broader food insecurity will take longer.

The Independent Working Group on Food Poverty was established at the request of Scottish Ministers in October 2015. It has brought together people and agencies from across Scottish society with a critical interest in addressing food insecurity and the deeper systemic causes of poverty in Scotland today. Vitally, this has included people directly aware of what it feels like to have to make the hard choices between feeding their families or heating their homes. As a group we are committed, collectively and individually, to continuing our work beyond the submission of this report and would recommend that the Group should continue to work in partnership to help deliver the recommendations of this report.

A great deal has already been written about food insecurity. We have sought to draw upon this work but not replicate it. We are also aware of some of the many excellent initiatives that are going on to tackle food insecurity and we highlight a small number of these throughout our report.

Whilst celebrating the incredible work that is happening in communities the length and breadth of Scotland, we consider it vital that energy shifts to addressing the underlying causes of food insecurity and hunger.

Our report falls into five broad sections:

- We have to treat people in food insecurity with **dignity** as the core principle which runs through all potential solutions.
- We have to **understand** the scale of the problem in order that we can address it more effectively.
- We have to focus on how we **prevent** food insecurity and hunger from occurring in the first place.

- We have to **respond** more effectively when people do fall into food insecurity and hunger.
- We have to **invest** in creating more sustainable, longer-term and more life-enriching solutions to food insecurity.

These five sections are not separate and we need to be tackling them simultaneously.

Underpinning this is the absolute requirement of a dignified response. We are clear that the involvement of those experiencing food insecurity and hunger is critical to the development, delivery and evaluation of effective and sustainable solutions.

We are submitting this report at a time of significant challenge and opportunity in Scotland at the birth of a new Scottish Government and Parliament with considerable additional powers at their disposal. Whilst recognising that many of the key levers, particularly those relating to social security and conditionality, will remain under the jurisdiction of the Westminster Government, there is much that can and must be done in Scotland.

## **Recommendation**

1. The Independent Working Group on Food Poverty should continue to work in partnership to help deliver the recommendations in this report.

# 1: Dignity

Some of our Working Group members have first-hand experience of not having enough money to buy food for themselves and their family. Others work on a daily basis alongside people in that situation. Dignity has been a consistent theme in our discussion. Our recurring question has been: 'How can society's response to food insecurity, and especially hunger, preserve people's dignity?'

A truly dignified system would be one where everyone is food secure, with access to adequate, nutritious and culturally appropriate food, without the need of emergency food aid. It is one where the right to food is understood as a matter of justice rather than charity.

However, the reality in Scotland is some way from that for thousands of households. So many people have to access food not through going to the shops but through some form of community or charitable provision. Or they have to apply for a Crisis Grant to get them through a particularly difficult period.

When people are in this difficult situation, the services provided have to do everything possible to maximise dignity. This could be about the sorts of questions people are asked, the way staff and others talk to people and about them, the sorts of places where the service is provided, or the quality of the food.

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to making dignity a core principle of social security administration, and to spelling this out in the Welfare Funds (Scotland) Act. This principle should underpin all community food activities, including the provision of food aid. We recognise the efforts of volunteers and staff make to ensure this.

We have identified four principles which should guide a dignified response to food insecurity:

1. **Involve in decision making people with direct experience.** People who have faced food insecurity should be involved in the shaping and delivering of food security, from advising strategic working groups to everyday running of local food centres and including how our social security systems can be more effectively developed and delivered. To reduce and eradicate poverty effectively, we must ensure people with direct experience of it are seated at the decision making table. Only then can we properly understand the causes of poverty, the choices people make and develop effective solutions and strategies.
2. **Recognise the social value of food.** Projects which aim to build community around food often help to create the feeling of a place where people choose to go, rather than

have to. A dignified system is one which recognises the social and transformative value of food in the community.

3. **Provide opportunities to contribute.** Part of the stigma people face is the feeling of being a 'scrounger' and a 'skiver'. A more dignified system tackling food insecurity would provide opportunities for individuals to volunteer in different roles, to share and learn new skills, to grow their own vegetables and to participate in local community life.
4. **Leave people with the power to choose.** Adults in our society typically exercise choice over the food they buy. This choice is sharply constrained for people on low income. Our response to food poverty should ensure that as far as possible people are able to choose what they eat: that the choice available should include fresh and healthy food; and that where people can pay something for their food they have the dignity of doing so.

There are opportunities, including through the Scottish Government's Fair Food Fund, its wider funding of initiatives tackling food insecurity and the development of its new Society Security Agency to ensure that these principles are promoted. The most dignified system is one where people do not need to access emergency food aid but have the power and resources to choose what they eat.

## **Recommendation**

2. Any organisation which secures Scottish Government funding and support to work on tackling food poverty must demonstrate how its approach promotes dignity and is helping to transition away from emergency food aid as the primary response.

## **Commitment**

- i. In our work we will seek to develop and deliver dignified responses to food insecurity and food poverty.

## 2: Understanding food poverty

### 2.1 What is the Scale and Nature of the Problem?

At present the information regularly published by the Trussell Trust is most commonly cited when discussing food insecurity. In Scotland 14,318 referrals were made for men, women and children in 2012/13, rising to 71,428 in 2013/14 and 117,689 in 2014/15. Most recent figures show that 133,726 referrals were made in 2015/16 – including 43,962 for children – to access a three-day supply of emergency food.<sup>2</sup>

These numbers, however, are likely to significantly underestimate the scale of the problem of food insecurity. While the Trussell Trust is the largest foodbank provider, a substantial proportion of charitable emergency food in Scotland comes from other providers.<sup>3</sup>

We also know that many who struggle to afford food will not, for various reasons, access a foodbank.<sup>4</sup> Indeed international evidence demonstrates the majority of people experiencing food insecurity do not access foodbanks.<sup>5</sup> This is likely to be the case in Scotland too.

In the absence of a systematic measure of food insecurity in Scotland, studies which identify levels of household expenditure on food have been used to suggest how far families may have difficulty affording food.

The 2012 Living Costs and Food Survey identified that households in Scotland living in relative poverty spent 23% of their weekly income on food which, though less in absolute terms,<sup>6</sup> was more than twice the proportion spent by better off households.

Sixteen per cent of the Scottish population are identified as living in relative poverty, and 10% in extreme poverty after housing costs,<sup>7</sup> so we believe that far more people experience food insecurity, including hunger, than the number using foodbanks.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/> (The Trussell Trust statistics are a measure of volume and are not necessarily unique users).

<sup>3</sup> A study carried out by the Poverty Alliance identified 167 groups in Scotland offering some form of food aid. Only 48% of the study's survey respondents (80) were Trussell Trust providers. "Making the Connections: A study of emergency food aid in Scotland", The Poverty Alliance, 2015  
[http://foodaidscotland.org/userfiles/files/food\\_aid\\_study\\_2015.pdf](http://foodaidscotland.org/userfiles/files/food_aid_study_2015.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> UK studies have highlighted that people often refuse referral to a foodbank. (F. Douglas, O. Ejebu, A. Garcia, F. MacKenzie, S. Whybrow, L. McKenzie, A. Ludbrook, and E. Dowler (2015) "The nature and extent of food poverty/Insecurity in Scotland", Health Scotland).

<sup>5</sup> Canadian research suggests only 20-30% of food insecure Canadians use foodbanks. "Food banks, welfare, and food insecurity in Canada", Tarasuk V, Dachner N, Loopstra R, 2014, British Food Journal, Vol. 116 Iss 9 pp. 1405 – 1417, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/BFJ-02-2014-0077>.

<sup>6</sup> F. Douglas, O. Ejebu, A. Garcia, F. MacKenzie, S. Whybrow, L. McKenzie, A. Ludbrook, and E. Dowler (2015) "The nature and extent of food poverty/Insecurity in Scotland", Health Scotland.

<sup>7</sup> Scottish Government, "Severe Poverty in Scotland", Scottish Government, 2015.

If we are to tackle food insecurity we need to understand the scale of the problem including the numbers of people who are using foodbanks, why they are doing so, and how often. We also need to have a deeper understanding of why people choose not to access emergency food provision or are unable to do so.

### **Levels of food insecurity in the UK in 2014**

A recent study by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations<sup>8</sup> for the first time has measured household food insecurity across 140 countries. This used the same set of eight questions to ask people about their ability to get enough food in the past year.

Food insecurity has varying degrees of severity. Early stages involve worry about whether there will be enough food, followed by compromising quality, variety and quantity of food. Going without food and experiencing hunger are the most severe stages.

In the UK, 1,000 people were interviewed by telephone or mobile phone. The data show that 10.1% of people aged 15 or over in the UK were moderately food insecure in 2014. This means they reported experiencing a struggle to get enough food to eat.

Of these people, 4.5% experienced a severe level of food insecurity, typically having gone a whole day without eating at times during the year because they could not afford enough food.

This puts the UK in the bottom half of European nations, though we are one of Europe's richer nations. There are no comparable sources to determine if and how the situation has changed over recent years. The situation in Scotland is likely to be similar to that in the UK as a whole, but the sample size is too small to draw any conclusions.

## **2.2 The Causes**

Research into food insecurity in Scotland and the rest of the UK has consistently linked it to low income, including low-paid, insecure work and inadequate benefit levels. Analysis has also pointed to rising food prices, as well as the high costs of fuel and rent, as factors which impact on households' ability to afford food.<sup>9</sup> The accessibility of shops selling affordable, healthy foods, and the costs of transport to reach them, has also been considered to contribute to the experience of food insecurity.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Carlo Cafiero, Mark Nord, Sara Viviani, Mauro Eduardo Del Grossi, Terri Ballard, Anne Kepple, Meghan Miller, Chiamaka Nwosu (2016). "Voices of the Hungry: Methods for estimating comparable prevalence rates of food insecurity experienced by adults throughout the world", Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Rome.

<sup>9</sup> F. Douglas et al (2015). "The nature and extent of food poverty/Insecurity in Scotland".

<sup>10</sup> Cummins S, Smith DM, Aitken Z, Dawson J, Marshall D, Sparks L, et al. (2010) Neighbourhood deprivation and the price and availability of fruit and vegetables in Scotland. "Journal of Human Nutrition and Dietetics". 23(5):494-501.



Recent studies have examined the reasons why increasing numbers of people are turning to foodbanks for help.<sup>1112</sup> People using foodbanks are invariably facing an acute income crisis.

Evidence consistently points to problems within the social security system, including delays and errors in administration of payments, as well as the imposition of punitive benefit sanctions, as reasons for a sudden disruption to incomes which cause people to have to access a foodbank.

Scotland-specific studies on causes of foodbank use are consistent with these UK-wide findings, and have also highlighted instances of problems with the Scottish Welfare Fund including lack of awareness of the Fund.<sup>13</sup>

### **2.3 Public Attitudes**

Recent research into public opinions around food insecurity in Scotland has shown a clear strength of feeling amongst the population and a mandate for action to tackle it.<sup>14</sup> The research demonstrates widespread acknowledgement of the problem, concern for people struggling to afford food, and belief that foodbanks should not be a feature of modern society. While the research also suggests a strong desire for the UK Government to take action to tackle food insecurity, this is likely to be replicated at Scottish level. This gives the Scottish Government and Parliament a strong mandate for decisive and progressive action.

Respondents also demonstrated an understanding of the structural causes of food insecurity, including: low wages; jobs that don't provide enough working hours; the rising price of food; and levels of unemployment. However, they also perceived 'individual' factors, such as people not prioritising how they spend their money correctly, as contributing to food insecurity. Such 'individual' factors are not consistent with the evidence of the causes of food insecurity.

To support effective measures and interventions to reduce food insecurity in Scotland, it is critical we continue to build the public's understanding of the causes of food insecurity.

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<sup>11</sup> J. Perry, T. Sefton, M. Williams, and M. Haddad (2014), "Emergency Use Only: Understanding and Reducing the Use of Food Banks in the UK", Oxfam.

<sup>12</sup> Cooper, N., Purcell S. and Jackson (2014) "Below the Breadline: the relentless rise of food poverty in Britain". Church Action on Poverty, Oxfam and Trussell Trust.

<sup>13</sup> Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) "Hard Choices: Reducing the need for food banks in Scotland", Child Poverty Action Group.

<sup>14</sup> Oxfam Scotland: <http://www.oxfam.org.uk/scotland/blog/2015/12/public-in-scotland-need-for-food-banks-fundamentally-wrong>

## 2.4 What Do We Mean By the Right to Food?

Whilst there is a great deal that can and must be done in the short term to tackle the symptoms and causes of food insecurity and hunger, we recognise that some of the issues need sustained long term action. This is particularly the case given the broader changes in the food system in the coming decades as a result of climate change and other pressures.

We believe that the Scottish Government, with the support of the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SCHR), should give active consideration to enshrining the right to adequate food in domestic law.

The right to adequate food is set out in Article 11 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) to which Scotland, as part of the UK, has been a signatory since 1976.

Several countries have the right to food directly in their constitution, or have given direct effect to ICESCR. Germany has taken a systematic approach towards calculating social security benefits so that they meet the minimum core content required to live a life with dignity. In arriving at the figure, Germany includes the minimum income required to have a nutritious and culturally appropriate diet.<sup>15</sup>

Establishing the right to adequate food in Scots Law will not in itself end food insecurity just as homelessness legislation has not eradicated homelessness. It would mean, however, that the Scottish Government and other public bodies would have a duty to ensure that all individuals have secure access to adequate and affordable food including the means to purchase it.

Also, the Scottish Government would be prepared to be challenged legally on how well it is implementing policies and deploying resources towards this end, within the limits of its existing powers. Underpinning policy with law makes policy more resilient and durable as governments change.

It is our considered view that this proposal is a good fit with the Scottish Government's commitment to broadening and deepening the culture of human rights in Scotland. Tackling food insecurity in Scotland, like tackling homelessness, is a challenge which will outlast several parliaments.

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<sup>15</sup> According to the Federal Constitutional Court of Germany, the right to an "Existenzminimum" 'guarantees the whole subsistence minimum by a uniform fundamental rights guarantee which encompasses both the physical existence of the individual, that is food, clothing, household goods, housing, heating, hygiene and health . . . , and ensuring the possibility to maintain inter-human relationships and a minimum of participation in social, cultural and political life'. (Hartz IV, para 135). <https://www.escr-net.org/caselaw/2012/judgment-federal-constitutional-court-proceeding-1-bvl-1010>.

## 2.5 Next Steps

It is difficult to tackle a problem, or make a credible case for doing so, without understanding its true scale, drivers and impacts. The Scottish Government should therefore commit to improving the knowledge and understanding of food insecurity in Scotland through the development of a robust evidence base.

A robust monitoring system could include: an annual nationwide measure of food insecurity in Scotland, such as the “Canadian Household Food Security Survey”;<sup>16</sup> a bi-annual nationally representative sample of independent foodbank usage; and monitoring of referrals to emergency food aid providers, mapping this data to uptake of the Scottish Welfare Fund to ensure best practice pathways are identified and shared.

This will provide us with a true measure of the number of people in Scotland facing both acute and chronic food insecurity and make it possible to determine the impact of measures taken to reduce these.

We should also gather data from a representative sample of emergency food providers to understand local trends and assess the impact of local interventions.

We should monitor the factors which contribute to food insecurity, including: the price of food and wider essentials; social security changes; and rates of employment and pay.

While it will be a couple of years before we have reliable baseline population data on household food insecurity in Scotland, once this is in place the Scottish Government should set stretching targets for reducing food insecurity and hunger. Ideally, this data would be gathered annually as part of the Scottish Health Survey, allowing robust year on year comparisons. The data should enable estimates of the number of children and the percentage of in-work households affected by food insecurity as well as disaggregating food insecurity by gender, as there is evidence that women, and lone parents in particular, are disproportionately affected.

While some fluctuations in the levels of household food insecurity will clearly be attributable to wider changes in the Scottish economy and external influences such as food price volatility, it should be possible to directly monitor the impact of policy interventions on reducing household food insecurity.

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<sup>16</sup> A robust monitoring system could include: an annual nationwide measure of food insecurity in Scotland, such as the “Canadian Household Food Security Survey or the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Food Insecurity Experience Scale”, with the data published annually; a bi-annual nationally representative sample of independent foodbank usage with the data published; monitoring of referrals to emergency food aid providers, mapping this data to uptake of the Scottish Welfare Fund to ensure best practice pathways are identified and shared with this information published quarterly; and monitoring the number of emergency food aid providers and their location, with this information published annually.

Comparisons between Scotland and other countries are also worth considering although these may prove difficult, depending on the choice of survey instrument. The FAO report<sup>17</sup> uses the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) scale.<sup>18</sup> On this measure the UK sits in the bottom half of European Union member states and below countries with significantly lower Gross Domestic Product. Given that the UK (according to the FAO figures) has a level of household food insecurity around twice as high as Germany and the Netherlands and almost three times higher than Sweden, it would be reasonable to set stretching targets for Scotland.

The Scottish Government, and those involved in responding to food insecurity, should learn from international best practice to devise appropriate interventions in Scotland.

## **Recommendations**

3. The Scottish Government should explore how the right to food can be enshrined within Scots Law.
4. The Scottish Government should introduce and fund a robust system to measure food insecurity in Scotland, alongside wider measures of poverty.
5. The Scottish Government, having established reliable population data on household food insecurity, should set stretching targets to reduce it and explore how these could be integrated within the National Performance Framework.
6. The Scottish Government should lead in communicating clearly and consistently the causes of food insecurity as identified by research.

## **Commitment**

- ii. We will continue to challenge the stigma of poverty and raise awareness of the structural causes of food insecurity.

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<sup>17</sup> Carlo Cafiero, Mark Nord, Sara Viviani, Mauro Eduardo Del Grossi, Terri Ballard, Anne Kepple, Meghan Miller, Chiamaka Nwosu (2016). "Voices of the Hungry: Methods for estimating comparable prevalence rates of food insecurity experienced by adults throughout the world", Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations Rome.

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.fao.org/in-action/voices-of-the-hungry/fies/en/>.

*'We were working for an agency and they didn't call us for two weeks. So I had to find another job. I don't know why they just didn't call. We waited, but we needed to work and they [did] not call for us. The agency didn't tell us why.'* (Aleksander and Elena)

*'Over the last two month I was sanctioned by the DWP. Basically I've had no income, no means of getting food so I've been relying on the foodbank and stuff like that, and see if it wasn't for them, basically I'd have nothing at all.'* (David)

Quotes from "Hard Choices: Reducing the need for food banks in Scotland", Child Poverty Action Group, 2015, and "Making the Connections: A study of emergency food aid in Scotland", The Poverty Alliance, 2015

## 3: Prevent

Food insecurity is primarily a consequence of inadequate household income and the clear evidence is that acute income crisis (that is being left with little or no money) is underpinning a dramatic rise in the levels of food insecurity and hunger. We must respond, therefore, in a way which increases and maximises incomes, as well as prevents acute income crises wherever possible. By promoting the Right to Food, we must ensure a dignified approach underpins the actions of all of us, across the board, from the provision of food to the design and delivery of the new Social Security agency.

### 3.1 Ensuring Work is a Reliable Route Out of Poverty

After housing costs are accounted for, 50% of working age adults and 56% of children in poverty in Scotland now live in households with at least one adult in employment.<sup>19</sup> Figures from the Trussell Trust estimate that the proportion of foodbank users referred due to low incomes increased from 18% to 22% between April and September 2015.<sup>20</sup> A significant number of individuals in this group are likely to be in low-paid and insecure work. Given that many who are food insecure do not access Trussell Trust foodbanks, it seems the number of employed people going hungry is likely to be significant. The old adage of work being a guaranteed route out of poverty, therefore, no longer holds for many people.<sup>21</sup>

This trend is driven in part by low pay. An estimated 445,000 workers in Scotland are paid less than the Living Wage<sup>22</sup>, as defined by the Living Wage Foundation. While promotion and support of the Living Wage accreditation initiative is welcome, the Scottish Government and local authorities should also use all their powers (including through procurement, planning and licensing, and business support such as Regional Selective Assistance) to proactively promote uptake of the Living Wage.

Food insecurity and poverty are also being generated by increased job insecurity, including the rising prevalence of zero-hour contracts,<sup>23</sup> underemployment,<sup>24</sup> and low-paid self-employment.<sup>25</sup> It is clear that a wider understanding of what people need from work in

<sup>19</sup> Scottish Government (2015) 'Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland: 2013/14', national statistics: <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/7453>

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-34849661>

<sup>21</sup> 'What do we know about in-work poverty, a summary of the evidence', Scottish Government (January 2015): <http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/01/3233/0>

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government: <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/livingwage>

<sup>23</sup> Based on figures from the Labour Force Survey and an ONS survey of business it estimates there are now 1.5 million zero-hour contracts impacting on 744,000 individuals. ONS (2015) 'Employee contracts that do not guarantee a minimum number of hours: 2015 Update': [http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_415332.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_415332.pdf).

<sup>24</sup> 216,500 Scottish workers are estimated to be underemployed. Scottish Government: <http://www.gov.scot/About/Performance/scotPerforms/indicator/underemployment>

<sup>25</sup> ONS data for the UK suggests of the 1.1 million increase in total employment between 2008-2014, 732,000 were self-employed and 339,000 were employees. Median incomes for the self-employed fell 22% to £207 per week during this period. ONS (2014) 'Self employed workers in the UK – 2014':

order for it to be decent and allow them to live a life free from poverty, is required. This should then inform how we measure the success of the labour market in Scotland. We therefore welcome the contribution made by the Fair Work Convention to date, though clearly an ongoing focus in this area is required.

### 3.2 Social Security and Food Insecurity

Current benefit levels leave many households with incomes below that which is needed to maintain a minimum socially acceptable standard of living,<sup>26</sup> with clear evidence that households, particularly parents, cut back on food in order to make ends meet.<sup>27</sup> Acute and immediate income crises caused by problems with the benefit system (benefit and tax credit payment delays, sanctions and reduction in disability benefits) as well as problems navigating the benefits system have been identified as a primary reason for increased foodbank use in recent years.<sup>28</sup>

These inadequacies can be divided into two groups: longstanding, but increasing, inadequacy in the value of social security benefits; and, problems with the operation of the social security system. In addition, social security claimants too often report feeling stigmatised and a sense of being treated without respect or dignity within current systems for accessing benefits.<sup>29</sup>

### 3.3 Existing Powers

The Scottish Government and local authorities should prioritise investment in benefits advice and information services in order to maximise people's incomes and should carry out a review to enhance the quality of the service provided. Examples include building on and sustaining the Making Advice Work<sup>30</sup> funding stream, and supporting roll out of models, such as the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Healthier Wealthier Children<sup>31</sup>, that build income maximisation support into mainstream services at key points of financial pressure on households. Local authorities also have a key role in continuing to protect and prioritise investment in advice and information services, particularly during the current period of challenging budget decision-making.

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[http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776\\_374941.pdf](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dcp171776_374941.pdf). In Scotland, 287,000 people are self-employed - 191,000 men and 96,000 women. Scottish Government, Labour Market Brief (April 2016):

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Labour-Market/AnalyticalPapers/LM-Brief-Apr>

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2015> see Fig 1 in Summary

<sup>27</sup> See e.g. <http://www.poverty.ac.uk/editorial/families-cut-back-fresh-food>

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/new-report-why-do-people-use-foodbanks>

<sup>29</sup> See e.g. <http://inclusionscotland.org/welfare-reform-impacts-on-disabled-people-the-facts/>;

[http://www.opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/survey-results\\_201411\\_single-parents-and-stigma.pdf](http://www.opfs.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/survey-results_201411_single-parents-and-stigma.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.slab.org.uk/providers/advice/grant-funding/MakingAdviceWork/>

<sup>31</sup>

[http://www.gcph.co.uk/work\\_themes/theme\\_3\\_poverty\\_disadvantage\\_and\\_the\\_economy/healthier\\_wealthier\\_children](http://www.gcph.co.uk/work_themes/theme_3_poverty_disadvantage_and_the_economy/healthier_wealthier_children)



Despite existing investment in advice and information services, too many households are not aware of or are not receiving the financial supports they are entitled to. In some cases they rely on foodbanks when they should be in receipt of statutory benefits. Local planning partners should consider how co-location, routine enquiries and active referral pathways can integrate benefits advice within universal public services such as health centres, schools and nurseries and help ensure advice can be accessed more easily. Current approaches to linking households at risk of food insecurity with advice and information and support to access benefits should be safeguarded and developed further, including support for existing ‘community navigators’,<sup>32</sup> providing community-based support.

### **3.4 New Powers**

The Scotland Act 2016 sets out areas of social security to be devolved to the Scottish Parliament. Eighty five per cent<sup>33</sup> of social security responsibility will remain reserved. Nevertheless, around £2.6 billion of social security spending is to be devolved,<sup>34</sup> as well as powers to top up existing benefits and create new ones. The transfer of these powers creates a real opportunity to tackle some of the inadequacies in the existing social security system which contribute to food insecurity and drive rising foodbank use.

### **3.5 Improving the Value of Social Security**

Given the gap between current benefit levels and minimum income standards for many households,<sup>35</sup> Scottish Ministers should commit to using new powers to improve the value of current social security payments. This could be done by both improving the value of those benefits that are to be devolved, including Disability Living Allowance/Personal Independence Payment, Carers Allowance, Sure-Start grants and Healthy Start (‘welfare foods’) and by using new ‘top up’ powers to increase the value of reserved benefits.

We welcome the commitments already made by the Scottish Government to abolish the spare room subsidy (‘bedroom tax’), increase the value of carers allowance and invest in maternity and early years grants. However, we believe Ministers must be more ambitious and use new powers to boost household incomes more generally. To prioritise those whose incomes are being squeezed most by recent cuts, the Group recommends Ministers use new ‘top up’ powers to protect and improve the value of benefits for households with children. Initially this could be done by topping up Child Benefit. If the Scottish Government

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<sup>32</sup> By communicators we mean local people with direct experience of poverty who have received a basic level of training to enable them to help peers navigate and access services.

<sup>33</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/future-powers>

<sup>34</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0048/00484045.pdf>

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2015>



were to increase Child Benefit by £5 per child per week, 30,000 children would be lifted out of poverty after housing costs. The cost of this increase would be £256 million per year.<sup>36</sup>

It is for the Scottish Government to decide how to finance this through the reallocation of existing spending or the use of new tax powers to ensure a progressive means of raising additional money. Child Benefit has near universal take up and provides financial support even when families facing food crisis are not receiving the means tested benefits and tax credits they are entitled to. We recognise that this measure will not impact on everyone who currently experiences food insecurity but we believe that it will have a significant impact for many and will help lead to a generational change. If children do not grow up in poverty, they are less likely to fall into poverty as adults.

### **3.6 Creating a Delivery Culture Based on Dignity**

We welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to making 'respect for the dignity of individuals' a 'key principle' underpinning the devolved social security system.<sup>37</sup> The challenge now is to ensure that commitment translates into the development of a system that ensures groups at risk of food insecurity are able to access the financial support that they are entitled to in a manner that protects their dignity and human rights. The Scottish Government should ensure key stakeholders, especially those with direct experience of the social security system, are fully involved in consultation on the forthcoming Scottish Social Security Bill and development of the new Social Security Agency.

### **3.7 Reducing the Risk of Sanctions**

Sanctions have been highlighted as a key driver of foodbank use.<sup>38</sup> Whilst benefit conditionality and sanctions policy remain reserved, there are actions which the Scottish Government can take to reduce the risk of claimants being sanctioned, and consequently finding themselves in acute income crisis and without the ability to buy food.

New powers over employment programmes should be used to minimise the imposition of the arbitrary and inappropriate job seeking tasks that increase risk of sanction and to reduce the instance of 'mandated' tasks i.e., those that could result in a sanction. We await the result of the current trial of a "yellow card" system for people at risk of being sanctioned.

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<sup>36</sup> See <http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-Scotland-Programme-Scot-Gov-2016-21.pdf> and Keung, A. and Bradshaw, J. (2016) "Analysis of the impact of increases to child benefit and child tax credits on child poverty rates in the UK and Scotland", March 2016 Blog <http://www.york.ac.uk/inst/spru/pubs/pdf/CB&CTCtopups.pdf>

<sup>37</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairerscotland/future-powers/Publications/Future>

<sup>38</sup> See e.g. J. Perry, T. Sefton, M. Williams, and M. Haddad (2014), "Emergency Use Only: Understanding and Reducing the Use of Food Banks in the UK", Oxfam.

[http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report\\_web.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/Foodbank%20Report_web.pdf), p7

### 3.8 Reducing Wider Costs to Ease Chronic Income Shortages

A human rights based approach to tackling food insecurity would reduce the wider costs that households face which diminish their ability to buy nutritious food. These extra costs often include heating, housing, school education and transport, and are frequently aggravated by the 'Poverty Premium', where individuals on low incomes have to pay more than those better off for the same good or service. Testimony from foodbank users highlights the pressures other costs put on household finances, including for example charges for nursery snacks, school dress-down days, transport to work and even transport to access Crisis Grants.<sup>39</sup> We welcome the emphasis on reducing costs within wider Scottish Government strategies to tackle child poverty,<sup>40</sup> fuel poverty,<sup>41</sup> and affordable housing supply<sup>42</sup> and believe the impact of such costs on food poverty reinforces the case for prioritising action and resources to deliver on these strategies. Recent work with young people, teachers and parents has also highlighted the potential for costs within the school education system to be reduced or removed.<sup>43</sup>

More specifically free school meals entitlement, breakfast clubs and food provided as part of school holiday activities and programmes not only relieve pressure on family budgets but ensure access to healthy food for children and young people.<sup>44</sup> We urge the Scottish Government and local authorities to prioritise investment in healthy meals at school, and to further explore the potential for providing healthy meals as part of school holiday programmes.

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<sup>39</sup> Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland (2015) "Hard Choices: Reducing the need for food banks in Scotland".

<sup>40</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0044/00445863.pdf>, p19.

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/warmhomes/fuelpoverty>.

<sup>42</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Built-Environment/Housing/investment/ahsp>.

<sup>43</sup> See e.g. (2014) "Learning lessons: young people's views on poverty and education in Scotland", Save the Children/Children's Commissioner for Children and Young People Scotland; "Costs of the School Day" (2015) Child Poverty Action Group; "School Trips" <http://www.faithincommunityscotland.org/poverty-truth-commission/videos/>.

<sup>44</sup> See e.g. NHS Health Scotland (2015) "Process evaluation of the implementation of Universal Free School Meals - Research with parents".

## **Recommendations**

7. The Scottish Government should use all available devolved powers, including procurement rules, to ensure work is a reliable route out of poverty, including payment of the Living Wage as defined by the Living Wage Foundation, and the promotion of decent work more widely.
8. The Scottish Government should use new social security powers to improve the value of social security support, initially prioritising households with children through a top up to Child Benefit.
9. The Scottish Government and local authorities should prioritise investment in benefits advice and information services in order to maximise people's incomes and should carry out a review to enhance the quality of the service provided.
10. The Scottish Government should ensure key stakeholders, especially those with direct experience of the social security system, are fully involved in consultation on the forthcoming Scottish Social Security Bill, the development of the new Social Security Agency, and the creation of its new employment programmes.
11. The Scottish Government should continue to make strong representation to the UK Government with a view to reducing the risk of sanctions, maladministration, error and delay in the UK benefits system.
12. The Scottish Government and local authorities should use all available devolved powers to reduce the costs for energy, rent, transport and the school day for low income households.
13. The Scottish Government and local authorities should prioritise investment in healthy meals at school, and further explore the potential for providing healthy meals as part of school holiday programmes.

## **Commitment**

- iii. We commit to gathering, collating, analysing and sharing evidence of problems within social security delivery that are creating or exacerbating food insecurity and to constructively engage with social security delivery agencies to address those problems.

## 4: Respond

The measures set out above will help more households to be food secure, and will reduce the number of income crises caused by social security administration. We would hope to see a return to pre-recession levels of food insecurity.

However, many households will still be struggling against poverty in Scotland, and income crises will still occur. When people do face acute food insecurity they should get the dignified help they need.

If people are eligible for a cash grant this should be the first option. Alongside this, and when cash is not an option, people should have readily available and dignified access to food.

The next section looks at how the community food sector can collectively improve dignified access to food, both in an emergency and as part of building inclusive and supportive communities.

In this section we look more narrowly at what should happen for households which have run out of money to buy food and are facing hunger.

### 4.1 Cash First

As a general principle, households facing hunger due to an acute income crisis should be provided with cash to buy the food they need immediately. This will not resolve underlying issues but provides the most dignified response to people who are destitute.

We welcome the approach that Scottish Government and local authorities have taken to the development and promotion of the Scottish Welfare Fund. At the same time, evidence<sup>45</sup> suggests that foodbank users are not always aware of the Scottish Welfare Fund. We believe more needs to be done both locally and nationally to promote the Fund and the circumstances in which individuals and households facing a food crisis might be eligible for support from it.

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<sup>45</sup> See e.g. [http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG\\_Food\\_Bank\\_Report.pdf](http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG_Food_Bank_Report.pdf), p19.

## Scottish Welfare Fund

The Scottish Welfare Fund is a national scheme, underpinned by law (The Welfare Funds (Scotland) Act 2015) and delivered on behalf of Scottish Government by all 32 local authorities.

It replaces elements of the Social Fund abolished by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) in 2013 and aims to provide a safety net to vulnerable people on low incomes by the provision of Crisis Grants and Community Care Grants.

**Crisis Grants** made under the scheme aim to help people facing a disaster or emergency.

- A disaster might mean a fire or a flood.
- An emergency, for example, running out of food, might be caused by a sudden loss of income.

Section 5 of the Welfare Funds (Scotland) Act requires applicants for grants to be treated with dignity:

“In exercising its functions under sections 1 to 3, or any regulations under section 4, a local authority must take reasonable steps to ensure

- (a) that applicants for assistance in pursuance of section 2 are treated with respect, and
- (b) that their dignity is preserved.”

The Scottish Government publishes statistics<sup>46</sup> on the administration of the fund every quarter. Latest figures to December 2015 show that:

There are around 140,000 applications per year for a Crisis Grant, of which over half are repeat applications. Applications increased by 25% between 2013/14 and 2014/15 and have now levelled off.

Just over 100,000 (around 72% of applications) are approved, with an average award value of around £70. More than half of all applications are on the grounds of “emergency – benefit/income spent”.

About £4m of the £7.8m provided for Crisis Grants last year was spent on food – up by more than 60% between 2013/14 and 2014/15.

Ninety eight per cent of Crisis Grant applications were dealt with in two days. Applicants subject to a suspension, disallowance or sanction by DWP can apply for Crisis Grants in the same way as any other applicant.

Fifty three per cent of applicants are male, and 47% female. More than 50% of the spending on Crisis Grants is in the 20% of most deprived geographical areas.

Most local authorities spend close to 100% of their budget. Some have used their own funds to top up their Scottish Government allocation where needed.

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<sup>46</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Statistics/Browse/Social-Welfare/swf>.

## **North Lanarkshire Food Poverty Referral Pathway**

The North Lanarkshire Food Poverty Referral Pathway was developed by North Lanarkshire Council together with partners from health, the third sector, advice agencies, a number of foodbanks and other food initiatives.

It was agreed that when someone presents in food crisis, the first port of call should not be “a food parcel” but maximisation of income through the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Fund acts as the hub of the pathway. This ensures that all those who would otherwise have been referred direct to a foodbank receive a full assessment of needs, are able to access welfare rights, money advice or any other relevant information service to assist long term with the cause of the crisis, together with, where appropriate, either a Crisis Grant award or a foodbank referral.

Recognising that not all applicants to the Scottish Welfare Fund receive an award, the pathway is designed to ensure everyone receives a positive outcome, whether in the form of a grant and help with the cause of the crisis, or a food parcel and help with the cause of the crisis.

Since commencing operation in April 2015, there is evidence that the pathway is having a positive impact for some people with the number of food parcels being provided by participating foodbanks starting to decline (an 11.5 % decrease in demand for the same April to July period in 2015 as in 2014 and a 9% increase in Crisis Grant applications for the same period).

Whilst these can't as yet be directly correlated, the partners involved believe the referral pathway is having the desired effect. Concerns around waiting times for Scottish Welfare Fund assessment are being addressed. In the circumstance a claim has to wait until the next day, Scottish Welfare Fund staff are advised to make a referral to a foodbank or other food provider. Other priorities for the partners include improving uptake of free school meals and breakfast clubs and maximising volunteering, employability and training gains for priority groups.

When individuals and households present as facing acute food insecurity they should be offered both a full income maximisation check to ensure they are in receipt of the statutory financial support they are entitled to and assessed by the local Scottish Welfare Fund to establish their eligibility for a Crisis Grant. This should, ideally, be undertaken through a single referral/point of contact.

We are aware of a number of initiatives across Scotland which are pioneering new approaches, including in Fife, North Lanarkshire (see above) and West Lothian. Although different in emphasis, each approach has sought to increase the awareness and accessibility of current welfare provision and they are committed to income maximisation in a complex and constantly evolving environment. At this stage we have not felt able to identify one single model of best practice.

At present take up of the Fund is uneven across Scotland. An increased focus on the Scottish Welfare Fund as a primary means for addressing acute food insecurity could lead

to an increase in demand, at least in the short-term. We, therefore, urge the Scottish Government to ensure that the Scottish Welfare Fund is increased in value if needed.

Sometimes the crisis cannot be resolved by a Crisis Grant or benefits check and a referral to a food provider is still needed. Local authorities should work with their partners to ensure effective coordination between the Scottish Welfare Fund and food providers (for example, in relation to opening hours) to ensure that people can access food in a straightforward, timely and dignified way.

The dramatic growth in food aid over recent years reflects the huge concern of people across society for those struggling to afford food for themselves and their families. This growth includes a wide range of new and established organisations, from small faith-based groups to large housing associations.

Many of these are completely volunteer-run and operate almost entirely on donations of time and food.<sup>47</sup> The compassion, goodwill and concern which underpin this growth are to be celebrated. They are a sign of so much that is good about Scottish society.

However, foodbanks also face a number of significant organisational and practical challenges, including limited volunteers and donations, as well as a lack of control over the quality and quantity of food that they receive.<sup>48</sup>

In the current situation, foodbanks and other food aid providers are responding to clear and pressing needs. In the short term they should work collaboratively to ensure dignity is maximised whilst delivering a reliable and effective service to the people who rely on them. But, as we have insisted throughout our report, they are not, and must not become, a long term solution to hunger.

Evidence from Canada, where foodbanks have been an established model of provision for more than 30 years, shows that they do not and cannot tackle food insecurity, but instead tend to institutionalise and normalise it.

Over the lifetime of this Parliament, we hope to see a continuing shift towards models of food provision that are more embedded in communities and the eradication of the need for foodbanks. How we propose to do this is described further in Section Five (Invest).

We propose activities in the short term which will encourage that transition:

- Improve connections with other community activities. Sharing a meal in a communal setting, engaging in volunteering, and connecting with other community-based activities have the potential to reduce social isolation and harness the important community

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<sup>47</sup> "Making the Connections: A study of emergency food aid in Scotland", M.A. MacLeod (2015).

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

development role of food. Improving linkages between emergency food aid and wider community activities is important to help people access a range of support and opportunities.

- Build the voice of food aid providers in Scotland. Many hold strong views that food aid cannot and should not become an established part of the social security system.<sup>49</sup> We should listen to the wisdom and experience of those involved in providing food aid, the majority of them volunteers. We need to develop their collective advocacy and campaigning role, alongside people experiencing food poverty, in challenging the structural drivers of food insecurity and hunger.
- Support food aid providers to learn from each other and work closely with other local services.

## 4.2 More Than Calories

Published data on the quality of diet experienced by those experiencing food poverty in Scotland is limited.<sup>50</sup> We do know, however, that individuals and families struggling with household food insecurity report resorting to missing meals and buying cheaper foods, and that the consumption of fruit and vegetables is lower.<sup>51</sup>

Cheaper foods tend to be more highly processed and higher in fat, sodium and sugar exacerbating health concerns such as obesity, heart disease, hypertension and diabetes.<sup>52</sup>

Although considerable efforts are made by foodbank providers, it is recognised that the food provided can be low in nutritional value.

There is no lack of high quality food in Scotland, and a more dignified response to food poverty means that people in immediate need ought to have access to food which other people would also value.

One way in which this may be able to be achieved is through creating closer connections between emergency food aid providers and those dealing with surplus food within the manufacturing and retail sectors.

In making this suggestion, and building on the good work already being undertaken through organisations such as FareShare and Centrestage, we would want to be clear that more effective food redistribution can only be a very small part of an essential response to radically reduce surplus food and food waste.

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> For a recent review see F. Douglas et al (2015), "The nature and extent of food poverty/Insecurity in Scotland".

<sup>51</sup> Scottish Government. The Scottish Health Survey 2011: Volume 1 - Adults. 2012; Available at:

<http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2012/09/7854/3>.

<sup>52</sup> "National Service Framework for Diabetes", Department of Health (2002), also cited in "Press, Nutrition and food poverty", National Heart Forum (2004)



## Case Studies: FareShare & Centrestage

### FareShare



Last year FareShare redistributed over 1,000 tonnes of surplus food across Scotland supporting over 370 different charities and community organisations and providing over 2.4 million meals.

FareShare takes surplus, safe, quality food from the food industry and redistributes it to frontline services. These range from homeless shelters and hostels, day centres, domestic violence refuges, rehabilitation units, old people's centres, to breakfast and after school clubs and community food initiatives and foodbanks. Most are providing hot cooked food, meals and snacks to share at the centre of their activities, such as **Victoria After School Club**

“Most children who come along to our service are heavily in the poverty bracket which affects their health and diet. With our weekly delivery of food from FareShare we are able to provide healthy snacks to the children and introduce them to foods they may never have tried. We cook with the children and recipes are provided to take home. We were finding it increasingly difficult to provide healthy food for the children whilst keeping our childcare costs affordable for families to re-train or seek employment. FareShare has allowed us to work towards helping others to get out of poverty and into employment whilst improving the health of the children.” Moira MacDonald, Manager, April 2016.

In addition to redistributing food, FareShare provides support and training opportunities for the many volunteers that work in its four regional centres. FareShare volunteers may be vulnerable young people on a road to employment or further training or people with experience of homelessness and long term unemployment or chronic mental or physical health issues.

## Centrestage



The Catalyst Communities project, delivered by Centrestage Communities based in Kilmarnock, uses music and surplus food to bring people together to catalyse the energy of communities across Ayrshire. People from across each area, of all ages and backgrounds, come together to sing, to cook, to play, to share advice or to just talk. Then, after meeting socially, participants eat together. Meals are prepared by volunteer cooks identified from within the community and further opportunities are provided across Centrestage for community members to participate in activities and develop new strengths and skills. All services are received on a “pay it forward” basis, where all beneficiaries donate what they can to support the delivery of this model of dignified food provision developed by Centrestage.

Strategically redistributing surplus food, wrapping each area in support that has the arts and conversation at the heart of every meal dignifies the help given and builds community capacity. Working in partnership with Fareshare, Centrestage Communities has redistributed 15 tonnes of surplus food since January 2016, equating to over 50,000 portions.

It is clear that we need an overall culture shift whereby people from all income bands are enabled to access surplus food at a discount. As such we welcome the Scottish

Government's recent commitment to reduce food waste in Scotland by 33% by 2025.<sup>53</sup> To achieve this will require a range of actions to design out food waste as well as changing expectations and habits across society.

Sourcing surplus food from suppliers and retailers is of course only one option for community food providers which include not just foodbanks but also community cafes, drop-in centres, day centres, soup kitchens, after school clubs, breakfast clubs, family centres and faith groups. Scotland's farmers produce more than enough food for everyone, and some community food organisations have established direct buying links to source produce at a fair price from farmers.

We should also recognise the social value of food. Over the long term someone to eat with may be as important as something to eat for isolated individuals and families.

## **Recommendations**

14. The Scottish Government, along with local authorities and all those responding to acute food insecurity, should ensure widespread use of the Scottish Welfare Fund as the first port of call for emergency support and ensure the fund is administered in a way that allows this.
15. If demand for the Scottish Welfare Fund grows, the Scottish Government should increase investment in it accordingly.
16. Community food providers (including those providing food in an emergency) should work together to improve the quality of the food provided and create opportunities to enable the sharing of meals, the provision of choice, and culturally appropriate nutritious food.

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<sup>53</sup> <http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Make-things-last-and-save-22da.aspx>.



## 5: Invest

The test of a good food system is how well, within environmental limits, it nourishes the poorest and least powerful in society. Historically, this has not been an explicit focus of food policy, so it is encouraging that the Scottish Government's food and drink policy 'Towards a Good Food Nation'<sup>54</sup> makes universal access to good affordable food one of its goals.

In earlier sections of our report we lay out steps which we believe need to be taken to reduce and eradicate food insecurity in Scotland. We have been clear throughout that the causes of food insecurity and hunger are not, primarily, about a lack of food but a lack of money.

In this final section, we lay out proposals to develop the community food sector to provide a more dignified and joined-up response to food insecurity, including the provision of food in an emergency.

The community food sector has grown consistently over the last few decades with the backing of local and national government dating back to the Scottish Diet Action Plan (1996). Historically, the sector has undertaken a wide range of activities such as: bulk buying fruit and vegetables and retailing at cost; running fresh food stalls in hospitals; running classes on healthy eating and cooking; growing food; and running community shops and cafes.

Traditionally focused on the production and supply of ethical food (locally sourced and environmentally grown) a growing number of organisations have, in recent years, also focused on working alongside those experiencing food insecurity. Some areas of activity such as community growing and community cafes have expanded significantly in recent years. Alongside these, new social enterprises have emerged, such as Social Bite (a cafe which offers employment opportunities for people who are homeless) and community supported bakeries.

### 5.1 Community Food Hubs

Foodbanks have emerged in Scotland (and elsewhere in the UK) in large measure as a result of falling income for a growing number of people on benefits and in low-paid and insecure employment. A significant number have developed and adapted since their inception, becoming much more fully community organisations and connecting effectively with those providing a wider range of services and activities. We are keen to actively

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<sup>54</sup> <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/Business-Industry/Food-Industry/national-strategy/good-food-nation>.

promote this progression from emergency food provider to agencies that are more fully integrated into the local communities they serve.

Bridging the Gap,<sup>55</sup> Woodlands Community Garden<sup>56</sup> and Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership<sup>57</sup> are all excellent examples of the broader approach which we consider to be essential. They have all been in development over many years, illustrative that this model is not new but now needs to be given increased momentum and opportunity to develop. At an international level, and in a policy context where foodbanks have become largely integrated into the welfare system, the pioneering work of The Stop (Toronto, Canada) demonstrates the potential long-term impact of this approach.<sup>58</sup>

The Scottish Government can encourage this movement through the funding that it provides, including through the Fair Food Fund, to emergency food providers. Through the funding of organisations over a number of years, it should encourage the establishment and development of local partnerships with community anchor organisations and with the community food sector. There is the potential for this movement to be supported by a range of other funders and we would strongly advocate a shared approach across the public and charitable sector funding. Any organisation funded to tackle food poverty through the Scottish Government must demonstrate how its approach promotes dignity and, for emergency providers, how they seek to make the transition from emergency response to dignified provision integrated within wider community settings.

Our experience is that food helps to create community and that we need to be supporting communities to create food. There are four dimensions to this activity: growing, cooking, eating, and sharing (including distribution). Alongside this should sit a commitment to food justice. It is unlikely that any one organisation will be able to provide all of these elements, further emphasising the requirement for effective collaboration and partnership. We also believe that the effectiveness and sustainability of any approach will be dependent upon the extent to which people experiencing food insecurity and hunger are directly involved in the development and delivery of these innovative approaches.

Our ambition is to see a decline in stand-alone emergency food provision and an increase in community food hubs. These hubs will necessarily take different shapes in different communities. Potential partners will include community theatres, playgroups, health centres, faith groups and community centres alongside community cafes, community gardens and emergency food providers. A coherent and ambitious funding strategy, alongside some support infrastructure, can help to promote and drive this shift.

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<sup>55</sup> <http://www.bridging-the-gap.org/>.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.woodlandscommunitygarden.org.uk/>.

<sup>57</sup> <http://www.lcfhp.co.uk/>.

<sup>58</sup> <http://thestop.org/>.

## Community Food Hub: “Come Dine With Us”



‘Come Dine With Us’ began when a member of Scotland’s Poverty Truth Commission spoke of the isolation and desperation that was felt most acutely in the evenings, when hunger and loneliness can be at their most harmful. Building on the experience and success of Bridging the Gap’s ‘Big Thursday’ drop-in a three course meal was prepared and served for 66 local residents in the Gorbals by 11 local volunteers supported by five staff, with two musicians providing a lively social atmosphere. Refreshments were provided by a local business. Conversation and connections were sparked around the tables as well as a hearty meal provided in an atmosphere of unconditional acceptance and warmth. The meal is now occurring on a regular basis.

### 5.2 Community Food Plans

Local authorities have a key role in joining up actions on food, along with partners in the NHS, the community sector and those with direct experience of food insecurity. While local authorities have little control over the major economic influences on household food security and are facing acute budget cuts, they can and do make a difference at a local level. There is the potential for the production of community food plans which should be developed collaboratively and responsive to the local context. These should be deliberately light touch, enabling and based upon a number of core values and approaches, including:

- Asset-based community development – using people’s skills, raising aspirations
- Healthy, sustainable and fair food, not just any food
- Resource-sharing (buildings, staff, knowhow)
- Dignity and inclusiveness
- Additionality: any new national resources to add to local spend, not replace it

- People with lived experience of food poverty have to be involved in developing and monitoring the plans.

Plans can be linked to the new National Performance Framework which will take account of the Sustainable Development Goals. They will also take account of other government policies such as the 'Good Food Nation' Act and wider poverty reduction measures.

### **5.3 Fair Food Fund**

The development of this approach has to be a long-term investment over 10-15 years, not just a short-term initiative. There will be multiple benefits in terms of improved nutrition and health, and greater community resilience. However, these will take time.

We welcome the Scottish Government's continued support of the Fair Food Fund, building upon the Emergency Food Fund established in the last Parliament. However, this dedicated fund is relatively modest (£1 million per year) given the scale of the challenge. Alongside the Fair Food Fund, efforts need to be made to better coordinate public sector funding to support the building of a community food movement and this work needs to be done alongside other grant making and social enterprise bodies. It is the responsibility of all partners to work effectively together to realise this vision. The Independent Working Group, should it continue beyond the publication of this report, could be a key vehicle for strengthening these partnerships.

Throughout our report we have advocated the necessity to draw on the wisdom and expertise of people experiencing food insecurity. We would consider it essential that those who know about food insecurity through direct experience help to inform the grant making process.

### **Recommendations**

17. The social enterprise and community sector should continue the development of community food hubs across Scotland, supported by the recently expanded Fair Food Fund.
18. The Scottish Government, assisted by the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty, should work with non-government donors to increase the capacity of funding and expertise to tackle food insecurity.
19. Local authorities should work with others including those with lived experience of food poverty to develop and implement Community Food Plans, of which a central element should be reducing food insecurity and hunger.

## A Final Word

There is nothing inevitable about food insecurity and hunger in Scotland. It can and must be eradicated. To do so will require energy and commitment. It will involve making sure that people have more money in their pockets, better food in their stomachs and feel more fully a part of a dignified movement that will strive together to end hunger in Scotland.

The members of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty are up for the challenge and committed to the ongoing task of ending hunger together.



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