



a MENU for CHANGE

CASH RIGHTS FOOD



WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT FOOD INSECURITY IN DUNDEE

Recommendations

The following actions are suggestions for how stakeholders in Dundee could continue to reduce the need for emergency food aid:

1. Dundee adopts the advice-first principle in response to food insecurity, ensuring people in financial crisis are supported to access all the financial support to which they are entitled.

Advice-first principle: Responses to food insecurity should prioritise advice and support to access all available sources of income over emergency food aid as this best promotes choice and dignity.

2. Dundee City Council and the Dundee Partnership develop a strategy to ensure no one is referred to emergency food aid without knowing what cash-based options are available to them and receiving any necessary support to claim them. To achieve this it should:

- Ensure every service that refers people to emergency food aid adopts and implements a robust, written, onward referral policy to advice and support services.
- Deliver annual training and capacity building workshops for all organisations that refer people to emergency food aid, aiming to increase referrals to advice and support services and reduce referrals to emergency food aid.
- Develop and implement a local advertising campaign to increase awareness of Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants and address common misconceptions about eligibility requirements.

3. Local advice and support services increase their presence in non-stigmatising settings in each community regeneration area, for example in GP surgeries, support cafes and drop-ins and community centres. To achieve this, services should:

- Maintain and seek to expand Council Advice Services provision in all community regeneration areas.
- Improve coordination and collaboration between the advice sector and community food initiatives. For example, involving community food sector representatives in the Financial Inclusion Strategy Group; offering income maximisation and crisis response services alongside community food initiatives, such as the CONNECT team's work in the MAXwell Centre; encouraging advice and support workers to engage in the activities happening in community spaces to build trusting relationships.

4. Involve people with lived experience of food insecurity in decision-making about preventing and responding to financial crisis.

Executive summary

A Menu for Change: Cash, Rights, Food is a three-year project, funded by the National Lottery *Community Fund* and managed by Oxfam Scotland, Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and Nourish Scotland. It aims to reduce the need for emergency food aid by ensuring people across Scotland get the cash, rights and food they need before they are in crisis.

Since July 2017, A Menu for Change has been working in the City of Dundee with a range of council and independent advice providers, support agencies, emergency food providers, community food initiatives and members of the community. Following a year-long, cross-sectoral action learning set process, it is now supporting three pilot projects in the city. These are focussed on: responding to immediate need in a crisis; removing barriers to existing advice services and community food provision; preventing occurrence and recurrence of food insecurity; and providing wider wrap-around support.

This is the first of three reports about A Menu for Change activity in a variety of localities in Scotland. The next two will cover the project's engagement in East Ayrshire and Fife.

Over the past eighteen months, A Menu for Change has worked closely with some of Dundee's most passionate, capable professionals and local people, including those with lived experience of food insecurity. Together, we have examined the reasons people find themselves needing to access emergency food aid during a financial crisis and have begun to explore options for how to reduce that need.

We have made some excellent progress together, but there is still more to do.



Chelsea Marshall, Project Officer



David Hilber, Project Officer

Chelsea Marshall and David Hilber
Project Officers, A Menu for Change

April 2019

A Menu for Change: Cash, Rights, Food

A Menu for Change: Cash, Rights, Food is a three-year project, funded by the National Lottery Community Fund, and managed by Oxfam Scotland, Poverty Alliance, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and Nourish Scotland. It aims to reduce the need for emergency food aid by ensuring people across Scotland get the cash, rights and food they need before they are in crisis.

By building on the work of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty in 2015/16 (set up by the Scottish Government), utilising devolved powers and replicating best practice already being tested, Scotland has a unique window of opportunity to reduce the need for emergency food aid. A Menu for Change: cash, rights, food was developed to make the most of this opportunity.

Taking action to address food insecurity now and locally in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife

Using an action learning set method, we are working intensively in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife to support public and third sector services to move away from using emergency food aid as the primary response to food crisis. Food crisis is a problem of poverty and low income, which requires more than food to tackle it. Building on thorough mapping in each area, we are facilitating a diverse group of stakeholders including local authorities, the Scottish Welfare Fund, advice services, emergency food providers and community food initiatives, to develop models of intervention that address the underlying causes of food insecurity to prevent repeat crises - ultimately reducing the need for food banks and other emergency food aid.

This is the first of three reports about A Menu for Change activity in a variety of localities in Scotland. The next two will cover the project's engagement in East Ayrshire and Fife.

Putting lived experience at the heart of policy and practice

A Menu for Change is committed to ensuring that people's direct experience of food insecurity shapes policy and practice. We have involved people with experience of food insecurity in this project through:

- A unique qualitative longitudinal research project finding out what leads people to experience acute food insecurity and identifies their short and longer term outcomes following an experience of crisis. We are gathering evidence about how services and referral pathways can better meet people's needs, including by preventing repeat crisis.
- Involving a person with lived experience as a member of each group of stakeholders engaged in the action learning set in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife.
- Working with advisory groups of community members to review local services as well as the actions and pilot projects being developed in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife.

Sharing best practice

There are excellent examples of best practice in reducing the need for emergency food aid from across Scotland. Together with the best practice being tested in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife, A Menu for Change has been disseminating this at a series of workshops and events during 2018 and 2019.

Using learning, analysis and evidence to influence governments' policy and practice

Using evidence from our research and mapping we have produced analysis on the impact of Universal Credit on food insecurity in Scotland; the Scottish Welfare Fund; and Social Security and In-Work Poverty.

In March 2019, in collaboration with the Independent Food Aid Network, we released new data to show the extent of food parcels given out in Scotland is double the quantity previously known.

All of these are available on our website:
www.menuforchange.org.uk

Action Learning – process and participants

Action Learning brings a small group of peers together in a reflective learning and constructive engagement process that provides a challenging and supportive space and promotes individual, organisational and collective development. For more information, see www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk

Across the three local authority areas, we aimed to include council and independent advice providers, support agencies, emergency food providers, community food initiatives and a member of the community. The Dundee Action Learning Set had nine members: Council Advice Services (Scottish Welfare Fund, Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project, CONNECT); Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau; Shelter; Taught by Muhammad; The MAXwell Centre; Faith in Community Dundee; Fighting for Fairness community commissioner.

Responding to food insecurity in Dundee

Dundee has many welfare rights and money advice agencies that provide support to people facing financial crisis. Council Advice Services includes Welfare Rights, CONNECT and Dundee Energy Efficiency Advice Project (DEEAP) teams who offer money, debt, benefits and energy advice and assistance. Council Advice Services also includes the Scottish Welfare Fund, which is able to provide emergency cash to people who have run out of money. Crisis Grants are a vital form of support during a financial crisis, as they enable you to buy exactly what is needed, whether that is purchasing food or toiletries or paying an energy bill. Crisis grants have become increasingly important in the context of rising levels of insecure, low-paid work and the impact of UK Government welfare reforms on people's incomes.

You can read more about how the Scottish Welfare Fund can support people in crisis in our briefing *The Scottish Welfare Fund: Evidence from A Menu for Change*. A detailed report showcasing best practice in delivery of the Scottish Welfare Fund will be available in June 2019.

In addition to council-run services there are also a range of third sector organisations offering debt and money advice, including the Brooksbank Centre, Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau and Shelter Scotland. In 2017, Dundee Money Action brought many of these agencies together in a partnership that seeks to support people for whom debt or financial difficulty is a barrier to social inclusion. Dundee Money Action's partner agencies can help with someone in crisis and then can pass eligible participants onto Dundee Money Action if they are willing to engage with longer-term support.

The two largest emergency food providers in Dundee are the Dundee Foodbank and Taught by Muhammad. Dundee Foodbank is part of the Trussell Trust network and is accessed by referral only. A three-day food parcel is given out at four distribution points in exchange for a voucher issued through approximately 200 referral partners. Ordinarily, there is a limit of three vouchers in a 6-month period. In July 2018, the Dundee Foodbank's main site moved to Stobswell, and they transitioned from phone-based referrals to the paper voucher system.

Taught by Muhammad is also accessed by referral but three-day food parcels are delivered to the person's home. There is a limit of six food parcels per year, however it takes into account situations where people may require more. In addition to the food bank, Taught by Muhammad also operates a range of support cafés in community centres across the city, where people can come to eat and access advice from services such as CONNECT, Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau and community nursing.

The Dundee Drop In network, coordinated by Faith in Community Dundee, is an informal network of community and faith-based organisations that offer free meals throughout the city, seven days per week.

Accessing financial support in a crisis

In 2017/18, A Menu for Change project officers conducted a series of stakeholder engagement workshops with members of the Financial Inclusion Strategy Group, the Action Learning Set and the Dundee Advisory Group of people with lived

experience of food insecurity to identify local challenges to accessing support in a crisis.

These stakeholders identified a range of challenges that someone facing acute financial crisis may encounter when seeking support. These can be themed as follows:

- **Practical and physical barriers** (e.g. waiting times for appointments or results of an application; response that only addresses the short-term crisis; difficult to access by public transport or with a health condition; transport costs; limited opening times and no out of hours provision; only accessible by phone or online, which can be unavailable to someone in crisis; forms only available in English, or no translation services)
- **Stigma and social barriers** (e.g. services not designed or resourced to allow time to build trust with the person; waiting times and application processes that exacerbate poor mental health; faith-based locations that may make someone feel uncomfortable or excluded; services that feel unwelcoming and may not always treat people in crisis with respect or make people feel they should be grateful for charity)
- **Public knowledge of available services** (e.g. lack of understanding and awareness of existing service provision for someone in crisis, including who is eligible and how to access it; confusing or outdated public information)
- **Knowledge and awareness of alternatives to emergency food aid** (e.g. non-specialist support workers and volunteers lacking capacity and confidence to make appropriate referrals to the Scottish Welfare Fund; lack of coordination between the community food sector and advice sector)

During the Action Learning process (Oct 2017-Oct 2018), set members explored these themes in more depth and discussed additional issues that arose during the year. For example: the strain of being a food bank referral partner when volunteers and staff members do not have the knowledge, training or capacity to make appropriate referrals; the confusion or distress caused by the wording or information included in official notifications and letters from the council, Jobcentre Plus and the Department of Work and Pensions.

The introduction of Universal Credit in November 2017 exacerbated some of these issues by introducing a new, unfamiliar way of accessing social security that, by its design, requires people to go into debt or go without income for at least five weeks after they first claim.

Scottish Welfare Fund

Our research with people facing food crisis in Dundee shows that some people had not applied for a crisis grant because they were not aware of the Scottish Welfare Fund or because they did not understand its full benefits, such as believing it was a loan and being wary of taking on debt. One person reflected on the lack of advice or information about benefits or discretionary payments (crisis grants, discretionary housing payments) offered to him while he was in a homeless hostel:

"... if I was aware of the Council and the Universal Credit situation when I was homeless, then I reckon it would o' been a little bit different." - John, Dundee

Misinformation about crisis grant eligibility and terms (i.e. grant versus loan) remains a barrier for too many people who are instead being referred for a food parcel only. There are some groups – for example those experiencing in-work poverty – who may need targeted marketing efforts to ensure they are aware of the eligibility criteria and process for making an application.

CONNECT Team

One of the most well-known advice and support services in Dundee is the CONNECT team – the service is highly regarded by other professionals, volunteers and community members alike. Stakeholders throughout our engagement considered the work of the CONNECT team as a critical and important resource for people experiencing financial crisis. Given their reach and the positive way they engage and support people experiencing food insecurity, we believe the CONNECT team could make an even greater impact on reducing the need for emergency food provision with increased resources.

Working in community settings

Several interviewees in our research engaged with welfare rights and money advice services as a result of attending drop-in cafes in Dundee. There, they also built up relationships with staff, volunteers and other participants, often finding out about other services or support they could access through these relationships.

In order to maximise the positive effects of working in community settings, it is important for advice and support agencies to develop consistent patterns, such as keeping regular hours and sending the same staff/volunteer each time.

Taking action to address food insecurity in Dundee

Action learning set activities

Members of the Dundee Action Learning Set met regularly for a year, usually monthly, to identify and implement practical actions aimed at addressing some of the barriers and challenges described above. Each month, after hearing and reflecting on a particular issue, members identified and took responsibility for specific actions – individually, as a representative of their organisation or as a group.

Examples of actions that the group developed:

- Updating Scottish Welfare Fund notification text messages to include information about additional support options if a crisis grant is refused;
- Building capacity of non-specialist volunteers to make appropriate referrals, e.g. inviting advice sector representatives to share information about available support or deliver relevant training with Dundee Drop In Network volunteers;
- Beginning to map and raise awareness about how community gardens and growing projects can engage with the issue of food insecurity, e.g. where people experiencing food insecurity can access produce or which gardens enable people to join and grow and share food with others.

Some issues discussed in this process demonstrated the need for more substantive activities and formed the basis for pilot projects.

Piloting practice change

Following on from the work of the action learning set, A Menu for Change has worked with organisations in each local authority area to develop a small number of pilot projects. This is a way of providing practical and financial support to specific activities that will help respond to immediate need in a crisis; remove barriers to existing advice services and community food provision; support prevention of occurrence and recurrence of food insecurity; and provide wider wrap-around support. A Menu for Change is supporting three pilot projects in Dundee between October 2018 - September 2019.

Referral Pathway Tool, Faith in Community Dundee

Staff and volunteers in community organisations and support and advice services told us they sometimes feel unclear about how to make relevant and effective referrals for someone facing acute food insecurity. This can lead to delays for someone accessing the financial support they are entitled to and need.

This project aims to develop, promote and support a single, easy to follow guide (called What do I do if...?) that maps issues people in acute financial crisis commonly present with against services that are best suited to offer the required support. The guide will be designed for use by staff and volunteers who engage directly with people facing acute food insecurity, wherever they may present. The tool will support fast, efficient and relevant referrals from less specialised support services. This should minimise duplicate work for advice services and improve the service user experience.

Support worker, The MAXwell Centre

The MAXwell Centre is one of the main referrers to the Dundee Foodbank, based in part on their proximity to the food bank and their opening hours. Although specialised advice services are sometimes available at the centre, it is often the case that people presenting in an acute financial crisis are supported by MAXwell Centre staff and volunteers, who reported that they lacked the capacity to offer an appropriate level of support to everyone approaching the centre for a food parcel referral.

This project involves a part-time support worker in the MAXwell Centre, available during consistent times every day to speak with and offer appropriate referrals to those requesting a food parcel. With a dedicated support worker for this purpose, people facing crisis are assisted to access options such as Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants, short-term benefit advances, hardship payments and effective referrals to specialist advice agencies and community food initiatives.



The MAXwell Centre

Inclusion Worker, Yusuf Youth Initiative

People of minority ethnic backgrounds have low levels of engagement with advice and support services, despite high incidence of low income and vulnerability to food insecurity. Services told us this is due in part to perceived stigma and heightened regard for confidentiality around accessing support, as well as practical barriers such as advice and forms not being available in relevant languages.

This project is run by a part-time worker who engages directly with black and minority ethnic (BME) communities, especially Muslim communities. It aims to support engagement with existing advice services from the BME community and support advice agencies to review and address barriers people from the BME community may face in accessing their service (e.g. translation of information leaflets to other languages and supporting advice/support workers to be more aware of cultural norms and barriers that may be preventing people from BME communities to access their services).



The Elders group at Yusuf Youth Initiative

Advisory group of community members

Since October 2017, A Menu for Change has been meeting regularly with a group of local community members in Dundee who are interested in supporting the project's work to reduce the need for emergency food aid in Scotland. The advisory group includes individuals with lived experience of food insecurity and members of a wide range of community groups and organisations, such as the Fighting for Fairness Commission, the MAXwell Centre, Home-Start Dundee and the Lochee Community Larder.

The advisory group has contributed to many strands of the project's work, such as identifying barriers to accessing support in a crisis, informing the focus of the action learning set and reflecting on the purpose and direction of the pilot projects. Group members reviewed and advised on the initial findings and recommendations from our Scottish Welfare Fund research and the group responded to Scottish Government consultations on the Best Start Foods payment and legislative proposals for the Good Food Nation.

In the coming months, the advisory group will be reviewing Scottish Welfare Fund application processes, with a focus on accessibility and will use the Dignity Principles (agreed by the Independent Short Life Working Group on Food Poverty) to pilot a review of advice provision from the perspective of someone trying to access support in a crisis.

Conclusions

Over the past eighteen months, A Menu for Change has worked closely with some of Dundee's most passionate, capable professionals and local people, including those with lived experience of food insecurity. Together, we have examined the reasons people find themselves needing to access emergency food aid during a financial crisis and have begun to explore options for how to reduce that need.

Much of this work has focused on identifying and addressing the barriers to accessing advice and cash-based entitlements during a financial crisis. Important steps have already been taken: ensuring that everyone approaching the MAXwell Centre without money for food is supported to access advice or apply for a crisis grant; developing the 'What do I do if...?' resource with a range of key stakeholders, so that anyone working with those experiencing food insecurity is able to quickly identify and refer to relevant advice and support services; and building stronger relationships between advice providers and community food initiatives throughout the city, such as Taught by Muhammad's support cafes.

Dundee is well-positioned to continue making progress towards reducing the need for emergency food aid. This is due to its strong commitment to and practical investment in partnership working and involving people with lived experience in decision-making. Maintaining a focus on removing barriers to advice provision and cash-based entitlements will be an important part of this continued progress. Next steps include better understanding the outcomes for those who make Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grants and those who are referred to support and advice for income maximisation.

Realising the right to food in Dundee will require continued collaboration and coordination from a range of local authority, community and voluntary sector partners so that no one is left without enough money to feed themselves or their family.

Key contacts

A Menu for Change

www.menuforchange.org.uk
0141 285 8877

Action learning set members and pilot project hosts

CONNECT

www.dundee.gov.uk/welfare-reform/connect-service

Dundee Citizens Advice Bureau

www.dundeecab.org.uk
01382 307494

Dundee Fighting for Fairness

www.dundeefightingforfairness.co.uk

Faith in Community Dundee

www.faithincommunityscotland.org/faith-in-community-dundee
01382 825351

The MAXwell Centre

<http://maxdundee.org.uk>
01382 802628

Scottish Welfare Fund

www.dundee.gov.uk/welfare-reform/crisis-and-community-care-grants-scottish-welfare-fund

Shelter Scotland

https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/about_us/local_services/dundee
0800 800 4444

Taught by Muhammad

www.taughtbymuhammad.com

Yusuf Youth Initiative

www.yyi.org.uk



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