



CASH   RIGHTS   FOOD

# WORKING TOGETHER TO PREVENT FOOD INSECURITY IN FIFE: LEVENMOUTH FOCUS

# Recommendations

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

- 1. Each local Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty group in Fife should agree a robust, written, onward referral policy towards advice and support services and support local services engaging with people experiencing food insecurity to adopt and implement this.**
  - 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, while minimising recurrent crisis.
  - Fife Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Partnership and the Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group should take an active role in co-ordinating and disseminating this work.
- 2. Raise awareness and understanding of Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants to address common misconceptions.**
  - Involve people with lived experience of food insecurity and frontline support workers in a review and update of the Scottish Welfare Fund's Frequently Asked Questions.
  - Disseminate revised Frequently Asked Questions in professional and community settings, e.g. through Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty groups, community centres, libraries, GP surgeries etc.
- 3. Embed advice and support services in community spaces and activities where people feel comfortable in order to increase accessibility and to remove the stigma attached to seeking support.**
  - Ensure that advice and support workers have appropriate time and resource to engage in activities happening in the community in order to build trusting relationships.
- 4. Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF), as the main advice provider, should employ a financial inclusion officer to support and coordinate actions that will increase access to cash and statutory entitlements for those experiencing food insecurity.**
  - Activities to include: reviewing CARF's policy and procedures to promote preventative measures that staff and volunteers should take to identify and support those at risk of food insecurity while working with local partners, such as family support workers and health visitors, to identify opportunities to prevent increases in food insecurity during the school holidays. This post should be funded by Fife Partnership as part of a strategy for tackling food insecurity in Fife.
- 5. Create and implement clear pathways for involving people with lived experience of food insecurity in informing strategic groups and decision-making, such as the Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group and Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty Partnership.**
- 6. The Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group should be supported to achieve the outcomes of the Fife Food Insecurity Action Plan by both the Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty Partnership and the Fife Community and Well-Being Partnership, as well as the local Welfare Reform Anti-Poverty groups.**

## 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. The project 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, the project has been working intensively in Levenmouth in Fife to support public and third sector services to move away from using emergency food aid as the primary response to food crisis. Following a year-

long multi-agency action learning set process, it is now supporting two pilot projects to test alternative responses to food insecurity. These are focussed on: ensuring service providers and local people utilise cash-based responses to income crisis; preventing occurrence and recurrence of food insecurity; and providing wider wrap-around support to those experiencing acute food insecurity.

There is a long history of cross partner commitment to anti-poverty work in Fife. Over the past eighteen months, A Menu for Change has worked closely with some of the local authority's most passionate, capable professionals and local people, including those with lived experience of food insecurity. Working together, we have examined the reasons people find themselves needing to access emergency food

## 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 which is 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 locally in Dundee, East Ayrshire and Fife

Using an action learning set method, the project has been 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 created by poverty and low income, and it requires more than food to tackle it. Building on thorough mapping in each area, the project has been 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. The project's goal is, ultimately, to work with others to reduce the need for food banks and other emergency food aid.

aid and have begun to explore different options to reduce that need.

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

Anna Baillie and  
Chelsea Marshall  
Project Officers,  
A Menu  
for Change

June 2019



Anna Baillie,  
Project Officer



Chelsea Marshall,  
Project Officer

This is one of three reports about A Menu for Change activity in a variety of localities in Scotland. The other reports cover the project's engagement in Dundee and East Ayrshire.

## 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, which is 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 of food insecurity 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 A Menu for Change's research and mapping, the project has produced an analysis of the impact of Universal Credit on food insecurity in Scotland; the operation of the Scottish Welfare Fund; and the impact of both social security and in-work poverty in increasing the number of people facing food insecurity.

In March 2019, in collaboration with the Independent Food Aid Network, the project released new data that showed 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](http://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](http://www.actionlearningassociates.co.uk)

Across the three local authority areas, the project aimed to include Council and independent advice providers, support agencies, emergency food providers, community food initiatives and a member of the community. The Levenmouth Action Learning Set included participants representing: Fife Council (Scottish Welfare Fund, Social Work, Community Planning, Fife Community Food Project); Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF); Fife Gingerbread; CLEAR Buckhaven; Frontline Fife; NHS Health Promotion; and a member of the community.

## Responding to food insecurity in Fife

There is considerable energy and enthusiasm for tackling food insecurity across Fife, with effective partnership working at both a local and strategic level.

Commitment from Fife Council, Citizens Advice and Rights Fife, and the NHS led to the inception of the Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group (FFISG) in August 2017. With food insecurity as its primary focus, this group was pivotal in determining the direction of travel for A Menu for Change in Fife and has the potential to co-ordinate and drive continued progress around these issues.

The Scottish Welfare Fund, which is able to provide emergency cash (Crisis Grants) to people who have run out of money, is administered by Fife Council. Crisis Grants are a vital form of support during a financial crisis, as they enable

You can read more about how the Scottish Welfare Fund can support people in crisis in our briefing *The Scottish Welfare Fund: Strengthening the Safety Net*. A detailed report showcasing best practice in delivery of the Scottish Welfare Fund.

individuals 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 and low-paid work and the impact of UK Government welfare reforms on people's incomes. Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF) is the main advice provider in the local authority. There are eight branches across Fife, as well as pop-up clinics and a variety of different projects delivered in partnership with local organisations. Expert advice at the earliest possible intervention is cited as key in reducing food insecurity. CARF's work is vital in ensuring that people across Fife have accessed their entitlements and that their incomes are maximised to the fullest.

Alongside this, support services, such as Fife Gingerbread, are integral to bridging the gap between community members and crisis responses when someone has no money to meet their most basic needs.

Additionally, there is a complex array of emergency food provision and community food initiatives across Fife. There are eight food banks: four affiliated to the Trussell Trust (Dunfermline, Levenmouth, Glenrothes and Cupar) and four independent (Kirkcaldy, Anstruther, St Andrews, Tay Bridgehead).

Fife has a diverse landscape of service provision, demographic of people and geography. Based on guidance from the Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group (FFISG), findings from the Food Poverty and Food Insecurity in Fife report<sup>1</sup> and the project's own mapping of the context of food insecurity and current responses,<sup>2</sup> it was decided to focus the work of A Menu for Change in Levenmouth.

Levenmouth has six data-zones ranked in the 10 most deprived in Fife, with 41% of its population living in income-deprived households, compared to 20% for Fife as whole. Responding to this, there are a variety of community, third sector and statutory agencies working across the locality. In short, Levenmouth was selected by A Menu for Change because of its high level of deprivation and due to the number of diverse agencies operating across the area.

## Accessing financial support in a crisis

In 2017/18, A Menu for Change project officers conducted a series of stakeholder engagement meetings and workshops across Levenmouth.

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*“I don’t know any places of help tae go to, so there’s no’ really posters up or signs saying ‘Aye, go this way’ or ‘Aye, they people, they’ll be able tae help you out.”*

These stakeholders identified a range of challenges that someone facing acute financial crisis may encounter when seeking support:

- Knowledge and awareness of emergency food provision outweighs knowledge of the Scottish Welfare Fund and how to access it – this issue was found to be consistent across service providers and community members. Those referring people to the food bank were not always making people presenting in food crisis aware of their eligibility for alternatives such as Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants.
- A food parcel can be seen as a quicker resolution of the immediate crisis rather than a referral towards advice, and there is a lack of knowledge about how to access cash-based alternatives, such as Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants, Short Term Benefit Advances and Hardship payments.
- There is an extensive inter-agency referral system called Fife’s Online Referrals and Tracking system (FORT), but from engagement with agencies, there is no agreed referral policy for people experiencing food insecurity to ensure consistency of information and support, which is provided when someone presents in food crisis. Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty groups in each locality are well placed to develop robust pathways for people in crisis.
- The practice adopted in relation to onward referrals from food banks varies widely across Fife, with some emergency food providers only rarely making active referrals to advice and support agencies and others using robust onward referral mechanisms such as FORT.

Alongside engaging with local service providers, the project also hosted workshops with groups of people with lived experience of food insecurity to understand the local challenges to accessing support in a crisis and what may help or exacerbate circumstances. Key learning points were:

- Knowing where to go when experiencing an income crisis is essential. Readily available information and support about where to go was regarded as key.

- The experience of acute food insecurity is traumatic and has a lasting impact on financial circumstances and well-being.
- Advocacy and support are key in recovering from an income crisis. Many participants cited support service intervention as the turn-around point from crisis.
- The attitudes of staff and volunteers, as well as the space in which services are located, is regarded as crucial to ensuring initial and continued engagement. One negative experience can mean complete disengagement from a service or organisation.
- Having choice, control and input is vital in tackling the stigma associated with emergency food provision and the current responses to income crisis

The landscape of community food initiatives is increasingly diverse, particularly in Levenmouth. There has been an increased amount of activity recently:

- a community fridge is now installed in CLEAR Buckhaven;
- a Community Learning and Development-led pantry has been set up in the Leven Centre; and
- a community bakery is fully operational in Buckhaven Community Centre.

Community initiatives, such as these, can be powerful vehicles to accessing other types of support. However, it is important that community food initiatives and advice and support services have clear reciprocal routes to one another. This could be achieved through establishing robust referral pathways or having advice and support workers embedded in such community activities as trusted key points of contact.

In addition to this, for each locality in Fife there is a Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAP) group attended by a variety of organisations, both statutory and third sector. These groups are well placed to agree and implement a referral pathway that reflects the locality and ensures that people experiencing food crisis receive the best possible outcome, regardless of where they present.

*“there’s not really any advice, about anything, like you have to go, get the advice for yourself... You can’t maybe just like nip in to the Job Centre, they now have to make you an appointment, which could be like weeks away”*

<sup>1</sup> Iconic Consulting, 2017; commissioned by the Fife Health and Well Being Alliance.

<sup>2</sup> This involved focus groups with service providers, one to one interviews with frontline workers, month long surveys conducted by Leven Job Centre and Scottish Welfare Fund as well as site visits to services and groups in the Levenmouth area.

## Taking action to address food insecurity in Levenmouth

Members of the Levenmouth 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 collectively as a group.

The following are examples of actions that the group undertook:

- Fife Council's Scottish Welfare Fund staff developed and published an online set of 'Frequently Asked Questions' with information about applying for grants. As a result, action learning set members adapted their own practice to include information about the Scottish Welfare Fund when responding to food crisis.
- Visits to each other's services to better understand what each service did and to facilitate more referrals across teams. As a result, volunteers and staff were upskilled concerning the services that CARF provides and how to access these.
- A development day at a local community centre which focussed on the role these spaces could play in tackling food insecurity.

Some issues discussed in this process demonstrated the need for more substantive activities and formed the basis for the pilot projects supported by A Menu for Change.

### **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 it is working within to develop a small number of pilot projects. This was designed as a way of providing initial but practical financial support to specific activities that will help agencies and community groups to respond to an individual's immediate need in a crisis by: removing barriers to existing advice services and community food provision; supporting the prevention and recurrence of food insecurity; and providing wider wrap-around support.

A Menu for Change is supporting two pilot projects in Levenmouth in 2019, and these are outlined below.

## Money Crisis Tool

Knowing where to go when experiencing an income crisis was raised by community members and service providers as an important way of improving responses to food insecurity. Food banks are a highly-publicised response to food

insecurity, while other options, such as Crisis Grants from the Scottish Welfare Fund, are not. In addition to this, the need for a coherent response in which people receive consistent information and support, regardless of where they present when experiencing food insecurity, is essential.

Action learning set members discussed the value of a single, easy to use tool that would help those supporting someone facing a financial crisis to access the support they need quickly and efficiently. The group identified the essential criteria for such a tool – accessibility, utility and consistency being seen as paramount. The tool also had to be something that any service provider could refer to when supporting someone in food crisis.

With the input of the Levenmouth Welfare Reform and Anti-Poverty (WRAP) group, a money crisis tool has been developed, informed by the criteria of the action learning set. With the support of local organisations, this tool will be tested over summer 2019. In addition to the development, dissemination and evaluation of this practical resource for Levenmouth, the project will be an opportunity to engage with a wide range of food bank referrers and to strengthen common referral pathways.

## It's Your Choice: Modern Food Co-operative

Choice and control emerged as key for people when accessing food provision. For members of the lived experience advisory group, having regular and reliable access to food and other essentials of your own choice was regarded as important for both being able to meet your own basic needs and for a sense of well-being. In keeping with evidence, reports, and anecdotes, the members felt there was a stigma attached to accessing emergency food aid and that it was not a reliable source of food when experiencing chronic food insecurity.

This project has been led and designed by community members with experience of food insecurity. The co-operative is participatory, and no referrals are needed – people become a member for a nominal fee



Members of It's Your Choice

and small weekly contribution. It is open to anyone in the community and underpinned by the importance of choice; members decide what they take for their household and what they would like to see on the shelves.

An important part of the co-operative is the wider support available to members. The founding members have designed a money crisis tool specifically for people in the community, which will be disseminated to members of the co-operative when they join. In addition to this, a telephone will be available for use by members if they need to apply for a Crisis Grant or arrange an appointment to see a debt, money or welfare rights advisor.

This project will increase awareness of people's rights and entitlements, including access to the Scottish Welfare Fund. Establishing a collective buying club will provide regular and routine access to food and other essentials for the Levenmouth community.

### **Advisory group of community members**

Since April 2018, A Menu for Change has been meeting regularly with a group of local community members in Levenmouth 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.

The advisory group has contributed to many strands of the project's work and is directly responsible for developing and implementing the It's Your Choice Modern Food Co-operative.

## Conclusions

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

*"I wish I was even strong enough to deal wi' the government myself. Well, that would be quite a task. Yeah, I wish, but it would be handy if I was in a high position, that my word went. But I can't do it on my own"*

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:

- developing the Money Crisis Tool with a range of key stakeholders, so that anyone working with those experiencing food insecurity is able to quickly identify cash-based options and refer individuals to relevant advice and support services;
- developing frequently asked questions to dispel myths and misinformation about what Scottish Welfare Fund Crisis Grants; and
- working with the community to develop a food co-operative which is free from the stigma they felt when accessing emergency food aid and which aims to build stronger relationships between support and advice providers.

Fife is already undertaking a great deal of activity aimed at tackling food insecurity, and it is well positioned to progress towards reducing the need for emergency food aid. Maintaining a focus on removing barriers to advice provision and cash-based entitlements will be an important part of this continued progress. It is also critical that people with lived experience of food insecurity are involved in decisions to improve responses. The Fife Food Insecurity Steering Group has formulated an ambitious, but achievable, action plan. This plan will only be delivered if it receives the support and input from local people, organisations and strategic bodies.

Throughout the project's engagement with stakeholders across Fife, there has been strong commitment to partnership working. With continued collaboration and coordination, the local authority, community and voluntary sector partners can ensure that no one is left without enough money to feed themselves or their family.



Mural, Buckhaven commissioned by CLEAR

## Key contacts

### A Menu for Change

[www.menuforchange.org.uk](http://www.menuforchange.org.uk)  
0141 285 8877

## Action learning set members and pilot project hosts

### Citizens Advice and Rights Fife (CARF)

<https://www.cabfife.org.uk/>  
0345 140 0095

### CLEAR Buckhaven

<http://www.clearfife.org.uk/>  
01592 715021

### Fife Community Food Team Communities and Neighbourhoods Service

03451 555 555 ext 490036

### Fife Council Community Planning Community Learning Development Area Office: Levenmouth

03451 555 555 ext 450402

### Fife Council Social Work

[sw.enquiries@fife.gov.uk](mailto:sw.enquiries@fife.gov.uk)  
03451551503

### Fife Gingerbread

<https://www.fifegingerbread.org.uk/>  
01333 303124

### Frontline Fife

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01592 800430

### NHS Health Promotion

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### Scottish Welfare Fund

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### It's Your Choice

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