

Glasgow Food Policy Partnership Response on End the Need for Foodbanks Consultation

1. Do you think the approach outlined is consistent with the vision to end poverty and the need for food banks? Is there anything else you think should be included?

Yes. We welcome the chance to respond to and help shape the development of the national plan to end the need for food banks. We agree with the vision and ambition to end the need for food banks as a primary response to food insecurity and that further action is required. Food banks, at their current scale, are a relatively new phenomenon and we strongly support the ambition to end the need for them. We believe there should not be a normalised reliance on food aid as a response to tackling poverty as structural issues need to be addressed. It is also useful to look at this in a wider context in relation to ending the need for charitable food aid as a whole as simply ending the need for foodbanks could potentially result in the growth of other forms of charitable food aid. Food banks are one of several models across Scotland/Glasgow that provide food aid. We welcome the ambition to end the need for any type of charitable food aid provision as a primary response to addressing food insecurity and dealing with the consequences of poverty.

We welcome the consultation's commitment to continued Government support, including financial support, to local community food organisations in recognition of the wide range of benefits they bring over and above improving access to affordable food and addressing food insecurity in ways that meet the needs of local communities - for example, community food organisations provide important opportunities for social interaction and support within communities, skills development, building confidence and self-esteem amongst volunteers and service users and growing local food. For example, food pantries recently established in neighbourhoods in Glasgow are currently providing support and affordable food to communities in a dignified way whilst reducing food waste, providing volunteering opportunities and are providing wrap around support to those accessing their service by signposting to other appropriate services.

If the need for charitable food aid (which comes in many forms) was to decrease (or be eradicated) as a primary response to food insecurity, many organisations currently distributing food aid would continue to have an important role as community food venues. If we are to meet the aim of ending the need for foodbanks/charitable food aid, participants in these initiatives would be there out of choice and because of the wide range of other benefits that these community assets provide, rather than due to inadequate income or for food support because of lack of money. If we did not need charitable food aid, food surplus redistributors which are a huge support currently, would remain as important partners in community food activity but would no longer be relied upon to fill the gaps created by poverty impacts.

We are very pleased that the Scottish Government approach is in line with wider action on addressing poverty, set within a human rights approach and weighted towards prevention involving cash first and dignified approaches. This echoes the work in Glasgow where strategic groups in the city oversee the actions being taken to meet the targets for reducing child poverty set out in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017. Partners are working collegiately to achieve this and this aligns also with the formation of Glasgow City Food plan (in particular Food Poverty-Fair Food For All section).

It is positive and welcomed to have the Scottish Government's draft Action Plan and their commitment to ending the need for food banks. We also warmly welcome that the action plan was developed with those with direct experience of food poverty and food networks in the field. It is a basic human right to have access to food and unfortunately too many people in Scotland are faced with food insecurity and living in poverty and this continues to worsen. No one should have to go hungry. To make this a reality, it is hugely important that Scotland's actions are developed in collaboration with those who have direct experience of food insecurity.

We strongly support the consultation's recognition that fundamental to tackling this issue is working towards the eradication of poverty and this being a main priority for Scottish Government. Scotland has an opportunity to make change and ensure that no one goes hungry in Scotland and basic essentials for living a healthy lifestyle are afforded.

Key organisations in this sector will have a vital role to play in delivering an exit plan for ending the need for emergency food in their communities and eradicating poverty. Specifically from the document, we welcome the Scottish Government's commitment to work with the Trussell Trust and IFAN to support this. An exit plan should clearly include actions to work towards ensuring that everyone can afford the basics, by promoting fair work, maximising income from social security and action to reduce the cost of living. These actions are the drivers of child poverty being addressed in the Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.
<https://www.gov.scot/publications/child-chance-tackling-child-poverty-delivery-plan-2018-22/pages/3/>.

In terms of further items to include, mindful that many of the actions in place reflect work happening in Glasgow at present which is commended. However success will require more resource and stronger actions in order for real change to happen to reduce poverty and to end the need for foodbanks/food aid. For example, the Scottish Welfare Fund would benefit from more funding to ensure it can support everyone in crisis and we need continued investment in advice services and capacity of all organisations in contact with the public to be aware of the supports and services available. Glasgow HELPS resource in Glasgow is an example of a partnership approach to ensure access to information for the public is accessible.

The increases in Scottish Child Payment and Free School Meals has been welcomed and as these roll-out, it will benefit those struggling. Benefit delay is one of the key factors in food bank use, therefore, it would be useful if the Scottish

Government could influence resolving this delay period or to support people during the 5 week wait for Universal Credit. With disability benefits now being devolved, a consideration would be for the level of support people receive being reviewed to ensure disabled people receive the support they need.

2. Do you think that the actions underway will help to reduce the need for food banks as the primary response to food insecurity?

Yes - this is a positive direction but will need extra resource and reviews to strengthen over time to fully end the need for foodbanks. However, there is a lack of reach for working-age households who are unable to work (especially those without children). We would therefore support Scottish Government ambitions to go further.

3. Do you think that the suggestions for what more we plan to do will help to reduce the need for food banks as a primary response to food insecurity?

Yes these additional actions, such as bringing in a Minimum Income Guarantee, universal basic services and a legal right to food, working with national funders for a shared vision would reduce the need for food banks.

We also recognise, however, that while the consultation outlines and proposes a range of very welcome actions, it is possible that the benefits of these are offset by the UK Government's policies and austerity measures (including the recent reduction in Universal Credit). There are also numerous uncertainties about the future (e.g. will employment law be devolved? Will further austerity measures be introduced?). We suggest that any evaluation of the measures includes consideration of the extent of the impact of UK wide measures/external forces on the success of the actions to reduce the need for food banks, adopted as a result of this consultation.

4. Is there anything else you think should be done with the powers we have at a national or local level to reduce the need for food banks as a primary response to food insecurity?

We strongly support the Scottish Government using its full powers to prioritise ending all poverty in Scotland (already being exercised for child poverty) to ensure that no one goes hungry and that everyone has a right to good food irrespective of where they live, their income or their personal circumstances as noted in Glasgow City Food Plan.

We believe it is important that the strategy and actions to eradicate food poverty and emergency food aid echo, reflect and apply the responses to/results of the recent child poverty national consultation. For example, one of the key responses from the Glasgow Centre for Population Health was to echo the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's call for the Scottish Child Payment (SCP) to increase to £40 per week (if - as has happened - the Universal Credit increase was reversed).

As well as policies related to income maximisation, we urge the Scottish Government to ensure consistency and read across to wider policies related to food and health systems and consider levers/approaches which can support the national plan through, for example, the Good Food Nation Bill and the national strategy for Ending Destitution Together. The strategy takes a human rights-based approach and recognises the fundamental rights to an adequate standard of living - in particular the right to food, housing and social security which is essential to ending destitution.

Having adequate income is a key factor to addressing food insecurity, however there are numerous other factors, e.g. local access to and availability of affordable nutritious culturally acceptable food, lack of transport, equipment and social rules, which also need to be worked through and considered. Alongside income-related policies, consistency across wider policy areas will be crucial to ensuring that ending the need for food banks translates into health improvements and reduced health inequalities.

Affordable healthy food is imperative for good health, but research and local knowledge suggests that healthier foods are more expensive than less healthy foods, and the cost of a healthy diet can be prohibitive for some groups. Levels of obesity are linked to socio economic groupings. This is not constructive for enabling a healthy weight in areas of social deprivation and it can be harder to purchase healthier food in deprived communities due to a higher density of fast-food outlets in these areas and more limited access to outlets selling affordable, nutritious food. The Government should consider supporting community organisations and other initiatives to support/maintain/establish local access to affordable, nutritious food particularly in areas of deprivation.

Enhanced funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund would help ensure that necessary needs are met. Actions to end insecure work e.g. zero hours contracts would also help reduce precarious and unstable incomes. The social security system for Scotland needs ongoing further investment to continue to evolve and provide an adequate and dignified support for all when needed. We need to invest also to ensure every opportunity is maximised to engage with the public to signpost and support access to support and in the delivery of advice/support services. Investment in affordable and social housing should be prioritised as well as investment in subsidised and/or affordable fuel costs.

We have strong support for IFAN's hierarchy of responses and cash first approaches. The principle of cash first approaches including the provision of vouchers to support those in need of food support is sound and welcome but would need to also include access to wrap around support for the variety of pressures on people/families affecting wellbeing to make lasting change to people's situations. Cash-first' responses to food insecurity are the preferred option. However, we recognise that vouchers are a more dignified approach than being referred to a food bank/wider food aid to alleviate an immediate crisis. Whilst vouchers may provide more autonomy than using a food bank, there needs to be recognition that the utility of these will require local access to shops. Consideration therefore

needs to be given to making sure voucher schemes are inclusive and accessible i.e. that they can be used in an adequate range of outlets (including community food outlets) which sell nutritious, affordable, culturally appropriate food, and address costs for other essentials such as transport or personal or household items. - There is also a need to ensure that those with no recourse to public funds are not penalised if vouchers are used e.g. been seen as additional income and the same also for other groups in receipt of benefits.

Further investment should also involve budgeting support as is already provided by many financial inclusion providers.

Free transport to be widened out to those in low income would also be beneficial to assist all including benefitting those in work poverty and encouraging attractiveness of employment opportunities.

5. How should the success of the Scottish Government's policies to end the need for food banks be monitored?

The level of need for emergency food provision should be monitored at a national level, as well as levels of use seen by organisations that provide emergency food parcels. It would also be helpful for the Scottish Government to monitor levels of destitution in Scotland, so we can see how many people can't afford the essentials and judge the success of the action plan.

We welcome the awareness that this needs a comprehensive monitoring strategy to ensure that the intended outcomes of the plan have been achieved and also this should be subject to review throughout this process. Monitoring to ensure movement in the right direction will be provided by a reduced need for foodbanks as evidenced by, for example:

- Fewer people using food banks/ wider food aid.
- Positive feedback from health and wellbeing surveys (such as the Scottish Health Survey and Family Resources Survey).
- Positive feedback from frontline staff working with those experiencing food insecurity.
- Feedback from local organisations and communities that the cash-first approach is resulting in a reduced need for food banks.
- Consideration of the extent to which UK Government policy and/or other external factors have influenced the success or otherwise of the Scottish Government's policies to end the need for food banks.

Following from the creation of the plan content that involved those with lived experience, the voices of people with lived experience should be included in monitoring the plan, so the reality of plans and policies can be measured and it is a plan that visibly makes a difference to those it's intended for.

6. Is there anything else you think should be considered in the development of the plan?

This is a real opportunity to make lasting change in Scotland to work towards eradicating poverty and ensuring that everyone has the right to food in a dignified way. It is important that the action plan delivers and drives real and lasting change for people in every community.

If the plan is to deliver, it needs to be properly monitored, the actions included in the plan need to be properly funded and key organisations including food banks and wider support organisations need to be fully involved in driving the change and supported to drive the change.