

Cash-First: Towards Ending the Need for Food Banks in Scotland

Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

October 2023

Fairer Scotland Duty Impact Assessment

Cash-First: Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland

Aims and expected outcomes

On 5 June 2023, the Scottish Government published Cash-First: Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland (the Plan).¹ This details the nine targeted actions the Scottish Government will take over the next three years, alongside other public bodies, local services and anti-poverty organisations to improve the response to crisis and start to reduce the need for emergency food parcels. The learning from these actions will help to identify scalable interventions that move us closer towards our longer term ambition of a Scotland without the need for food banks, which we will continue to pursue to the fullest of our power and resource.

Our shared ambition is that everyone has a sufficient and secure income to be able to access food that meets their needs and preferences. Where financial hardship occurs, coordinated local responses are in place which prioritise cash-first assistance and integrate money advice and other holistic support services to reduce the need for food aid and prevent future hardship. Where help to access food is still needed, this is provided in a way that maximises dignity.

¹Scottish Government, Cash-First – Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland (2023)
[Cash-First - towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland: plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/cash-first-towards-ending-the-need-for-food-banks-in-scotland/plan/pages/1)

Part 1 - Summary of evidence

There is strong evidence that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage have a higher prevalence of household food insecurity and food bank use. This is informed by official statistics, evidence from frontline services, research publications, and consultation responses.

Official statistics

The Scottish Health Survey² and Family Resources Survey³ provide data on experience of household food insecurity, and this includes disaggregation by income and deprivation.

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD)⁴ is an online tool which identifies areas of multiple deprivation within Scotland and measures seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. Not all of these are measured within the Family Resources Survey, which is UK-wide, but it can be referenced against the data collected for the Scottish Health Survey.

The most recent Family Resources Survey data was published on 23 March 2023 for the financial year 2021-2022. This indicated that levels of food security rose as income levels rose:

- 17% of households with gross incomes of less than £200 per week were least likely to be food secure⁵ and
- 2% of households with gross incomes of £1,000 or more per week were most likely to be food secure⁶.

Food insecurity levels varied for households which were in receipt of state supports⁷ which included:

- 9% of all households in receipt of state support reported low or very low levels of food security.
- 22% of households receiving income-related benefits and 8% receiving non-income related benefits reported low or very low levels of food security.
- 16% of households receiving Working Tax Credit reported low or very low levels of food security.
- Households with children –
 - 12% of households in receipt of Child Benefit reported low or very low levels of food security

² Scottish Government, The Scottish Health Survey [Scottish Health Survey - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

³ DWP, Family Resources Survey [Family Resources Survey - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁴ Scottish Government, Scottish Index Multiple Deprivation [SIMD \(Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁵ DWP, Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021-22 (2023) household food insecurity data table, 9.8 [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁶ DWP, Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021-22 (2023) household food insecurity data table, 9.8 [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

⁷ DWP, Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021-22 (2023) household food insecurity data table, 9.7 [Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021 to 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk)

- 17% of households receiving Child Tax Credit reported low or very low levels of food security
- 31% of households receiving Universal Credit reported low or very low levels of food security.
- Households with older people –
 - 2% of households receiving State Pension reported low or very low levels of food security
 - Only 1% of households claiming Attendance Allowance reported low or very low levels of food security

The most recent Scottish Health Survey highlighted the differences in food insecurity in the link between income levels and areas of deprivation:

- 18% of adults in the most deprived areas worried about running out of food or money due to lack of resources compared to 2% in the least deprived areas in the last 12 months⁸;
- 15% of adults in the most deprived areas ate less because of a lack of money or resources compared to 1% in the least deprived areas in the last 12 months⁹ ; and
- 9% of adults in the most deprived areas ran out of food because of a lack of money or resources compared to none in the least deprived area.¹⁰

⁸ Scottish Government, The Scottish Health Survey 2021 (2022) supplementary tables, table WV3 [Scottish Health Survey 2021: supplementary tables - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

⁹ Scottish Government, The Scottish Health Survey 2021 (2022) supplementary tables, table WV7 [Scottish Health Survey 2021: supplementary tables - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

¹⁰ Scottish Government, The Scottish Health Survey 2021 (2022) supplementary tables, table WV11 [Scottish Health Survey 2021: supplementary tables - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](http://www.gov.scot)

Part 2 - Evidence from frontline services

2.1 Local authorities

In guidance to local authorities in relation to funding to tackle financial insecurity in 2021/22,¹¹ the Scottish Government summarised the issues likely to be faced by those with protected characteristics and those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage. This guidance provided examples of tailored support put in place to reach these groups and encouraged an intersectional approach.

We considered the feedback provided from local authorities who delivered the Financial Insecurity Fund in winter 2020/21¹² and the Winter Support Fund in winter 2021/22.¹³ These reports clearly highlighted the need for wider communication of supports available as a lack of knowledge was identified, during the COVID lockdowns in particular, when signposting was provided by a range of people, for example, food bank volunteers, school head teachers or social workers.

Targeted activity was in place to identify families on low incomes, many of whom were identified as being unaware of the support available, and including families who were above the income threshold for receiving low income benefits. They received additional financial support from the funds to boost their financial resilience, reducing the need to access emergency food aid. Monitoring returns indicated that over 70% of spend supported a cash-first approach.¹⁴

Triage pathways were implemented with money advice and income maximisation services co-located onsite or at local Citizens Advice Bureaux. These advice services proved vital to ensuring peoples income was fully reviewed and all appropriate benefits applied for. It also allowed officials to identify repeat clients and put additional support in place to drive down the need to access food banks. Some food banks also participated and signposted their service users to the local money advice centres when they identified possible need for support.

The Scottish Welfare Fund¹⁵ was established in 2013 by the Scottish Government and provides a safety net for people on low incomes and in need of additional supports which may include access to food in an emergency situation. It is administered by all 32 Scottish local authorities and all households can apply for support from the fund. Since its launch, more than 420,000 individual households in Scotland have been helped with awards totalling more than £280 million.

¹¹ Scottish Government, Financial Insecurity Fund 2020-2021 (2021) [Activities delivered - Local action to tackle food insecurity: summary of activities, trends and learning - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot/\)](#)

¹² Scottish Government, Financial Insecurity Fund 2020-2021 (2021) [Activities delivered - Local action to tackle food insecurity: summary of activities, trends and learning - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹³ Scottish Government, Winter Support Fund 2021-2022 (2022) [Winter Support Fund: summary of local action to tackle financial insecurity 2021-22 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁴ Scottish Government, Winter Support Fund 2021-2022 (2022) [Winter Support Fund: summary of local action to tackle financial insecurity 2021-22 - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁵ Scottish Government, Scottish Welfare Fund [Scottish Welfare Fund - Social security - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Quarterly statistics are published¹⁶ which show how many applications have been made to each local authority, how many awards they made and how much money they awarded. The statistics also show the different reasons for applications being made, how long it takes to process applications and the different types of households which apply. They also provide information on the numbers of decisions which are considered by local authorities under the review process.

2.2 Food banks

There is significant evidence that food banks are now increasingly being approached by people who had not previously accessed them.

The Independent Food Aid Network's (IFAN) most recent survey findings published on 16 May 2023¹⁷ demonstrated the challenges faced by households in relation to food insecurity and the widening of existing inequalities with organisations seeing demand increase comparing January to March 2022 with January to March 2023. Over 89% of the organisations reported supporting a significant number of people needing help for the first time with over 81% needing regular support. Statistics published in February 2023¹⁸ reported an increase in parents and carers with infants under 12 months needing support, as well as people in employment.

Data published by the Trussell Trust between April 2022 and September 2022¹⁹ highlighted that there are an increasing number of people experiencing hunger due to the cost of living crisis. A You Gov survey in August 2022²⁰ found that 40% of people in receipt of Universal Credit had skipped meals across the previous three months because they couldn't afford to eat and to keep up with other essential costs. Further, one in five (21%) people were unable to cook hot food as they couldn't afford to use the cooker, while almost a quarter (23%) were unable to travel to work or essential appointments because they couldn't afford the cost of public transport or fuel.

Similar to IFAN, the Trussell Trust reported that 13,000 families were "forced to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network for the first time". This represents a 36% increase in the number of families using food banks in the network for the first time compared to the same period in 2021. These families include close to 27,000 people. This is representative of increasing numbers of people experiencing hunger as a result of the cost of living crisis".²¹

¹⁶ Scottish Government, Social Security statistics publications [Scottish Government Social Security statistics publications - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

¹⁷ Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN), April 2023 Survey (2023) [Data | IFAN \(foodaidnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁸ Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN), April 2023 Survey (2023) [Data | IFAN \(foodaidnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

¹⁹ Trussell Trust, April – September 2022 Factsheet (2022) [Trussell Trust - Briefing - Emergency food parcel distribution in Scotland- April 2022 to September 2022](#)

²⁰ Trussell Trust, You Gov survey data (2022) [Trussell Trust, commissioned You Gov Poll - 40% of people claiming Universal Credit are skipping meals to survive](#)

²¹ Trussell Trust, April – September 2022 Factsheet , (2022) key fact 5 [Trussell Trust - Briefing - Emergency food parcel distribution in Scotland- April 2022 to September 2022](#)

Further data highlighted that 20% of people accessing food banks were in working households, which can include people in receipt of social security who will be working or have recently been in employment.²² Trussell Trust have stated within their report that the first cost of living payment made in July 2022 did result in a reduction in food bank use however food banks recorded their “busiest ever August and September months” with research finding that people in receipt of Universal Credit had spent it all less than a month after receiving it, with 64% using some of the payment to purchase food.²³

End year statistics published by the Trussell Trust for April 2022 to March 2023²⁴ showed “a smaller percentage increase in the number of parcels provided for children from November 2022-March 2023” with a 17% increase in Scotland compared to 42% in England. Trussell Trust suggest that the extension of the Scottish Child Payment to include eligible children up to age 16, and the £5 increase to £25 a week, introduced in November 2022, may have had an impact.

The Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Essentials Guarantee research²⁵ states that the erosion of benefit rates “has been a significant driver of an alarming rise in destitution and increasing numbers of people going without essentials, including people higher up the income distribution”, and advocates that “the basic rate of Universal Credit should at least cover the cost of essentials like food, household bills and travel costs, but it is not currently set according to any objective assessment of what people need. That means there’s a significant shortfall between people’s living costs and their income, which is forcing many to skip meals, switch off essential appliances such as fridges, and turn off their heating.”

The Trussell Trust’s State of Hunger Report notes that “food insecurity is not about lacking food - it is about lacking income to buy food.”²⁶ It stated that “the socio-demographic profiles of people who report food insecurity and people who were referred to food banks were very similar”.²⁷ The report states that “95% of people referred to food banks in early 2020 were destitute meaning they can’t afford the essentials that we all need”.²⁸

One recommendation from this report is for “people’s pathways or journeys into food banks to move towards identifying where intervention and support could help to prevent a food bank being needed”.²⁹

²² Trussell Trust, April – September 2022 Factsheet ,(2022) key fact 7 - [Trussell Trust - Briefing - Emergency food parcel distribution in Scotland- April 2022 to September 2022](#)

²³ Trussell Trust, April – September 2022 Factsheet (2020) key fact 4 - [Trussell Trust - Briefing - Emergency food parcel distribution in Scotland- April 2022 to September 2022](#)

²⁴ Trussell Trust: End year statistics 2022-23 (2023) [End of Year Stats - The Trussell Trust](#)

²⁵ Trussell Trust: Guarantee our Essential campaign (2023) [Guarantee our essentials - The Trussell Trust](#)

²⁶ Trussell Trust, State of Hunger report, (2021) page 49 [State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

²⁷ Trussell Trust, State of Hunger report, (2021) page 25 [State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

²⁸ Trussell Trust, State of Hunger report, (2021) page 40 [State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

²⁹ Trussell Trust, State of Hunger report, (2021) page 93 [State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf \(trusselltrust.org\)](#)

2.3 Advice services

Last year, the Scottish Government worked with Citizens Advice Scotland to pilot the use of shopping cards as an alternative to food bank referrals to allow people to choose food that meets their needs and preferences, with advice offered to help tackle the root cause of hardship. An evaluation of the pilot indicated that people have a strong preference for shopping cards compared to food parcels in most areas.³⁰ The co-location of money advice and wider holistic support has helped to strengthen household finances, with an average financial gain of £1,660 for those who took up advice.

At all three reporting periods during the pilot, the top reason for need of support was low income (on benefits). The second highest reason at the outset of the pilot was low income (in work) however this was replaced by debt for the following two reporting periods. This evaluation highlighted the challenges faced by socio-economically deprived households.

2.4 Research publications

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published the Poverty in Scotland report in October 2022 . It states that “Almost one in five low-income families are neither heating nor eating and 18% of low income households have skipped or reduced the size of meals *and* not heated their home due to the cost of living crisis. Over one in four (27%) households that do not have savings have done the same”.³¹

The report also states that as households have had to cut back to save on the cost of food, people have relied more heavily on food banks. Of all households who have cut back or reduced spending, 7% have accessed a food bank. This rises for single parents (12%), minority ethnic families with children (13%) and low-income families (10%). Three in twenty households that had skipped meals or reduced the size of meals have also accessed a food bank.³²

A report published by the Health Foundation and Resolution Foundation in January 2023 found that “23% of those receiving means-tested or disability benefits are severely food insecure this winter, up from 4% pre-pandemic. Similarly, rates of food insecurity are much higher among families with three or more children, single parent families, and among certain non-white ethnic groups.” Challenges were also reflected within home tenure with “Social renters [...] almost twice as likely as those living in other tenures to say that they could not afford to switch the heating on when needed this winter (45 % compared with 19% for those who own their home outright).”³³

³⁰ Citizens Advice Scotland, Shopping card pilot evaluation (2021) [Citizens Advice Scotland - Final Evaluation - Shopping Card Pilot](#)

³¹ Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Poverty in Scotland (2022) page 13 [Poverty in Scotland 2022 | JRF](#)

³² Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Poverty in Scotland (2022) page 17 [Poverty in Scotland 2022 | JRF](#)

³³ Resolution Foundation, The Living Standards Outlook 2023 (2023) page 5 [Living-Standards-Outlook-2023.pdf \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](#)

This report indicates that levels of debt are increasing with “rises in the price of essentials [...] making some families’ budgets unsustainable, and debts are starting to accumulate, particularly among low-income households”³⁴ It is “workers in low-income families who are most likely to be going into debt”.³⁵

The data presented above evidences a clear link between low income, food insecurity and food bank use.

Part 3 - Consultation on the draft Plan

A draft Plan was developed with contributions from a stakeholder steering group and direct experience reference group, and this was published for consultation between 20 October 2021 and 25 January 2022.³⁶ There were over 400 responses³⁷ and an independent analysis of views has been published.³⁸ This reaffirmed a shared consensus across Scotland, including among food banks and other food aid providers, for a human rights informed approach to ensure that everyone can afford an adequate diet.

A series of workshops were delivered to gain the views of people with direct experience of food insecurity. The workshops were co-facilitated by Nourish Scotland and Govan Community Project.

Analysis of the consultation responses indicated strong support for the ambition set out, and that a cash-first approach was consistent with the need to reduce the need for food banks, potentially offering a dignified response whilst avoiding stigma, and providing flexibility and choice.

There were mixed views on the use of shopping cards as a short-term alternative to food banks, offering more choice and flexibility, and a step towards a cash-first approach. Clarity was requested for reassurance that the cards will serve as a crisis response, alongside measures such as the Scottish Welfare Fund and that shopping cards/vouchers will not replace cash-first options.

³⁴ Resolution Foundation, The Living Standards Outlook 2023 (2023) page 6 [Living-Standards-Outlook-2023.pdf \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](#)

³⁵ Resolution Foundation, The Living Standards Outlook 2023 (2023) pages 30-31 [Living-Standards-Outlook-2023.pdf \(resolutionfoundation.org\)](#)

³⁶ Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Consultation on a draft national plan (2021) [Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

³⁷ Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Published consultation responses (2022) [Published responses for Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

³⁸ Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Consultation analysis (2022) [Ending the need for food banks – draft plan: consultation analysis – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

Most were in favour of developing a cash-first pathway, signposting to advice services whilst remaining aware of the potential challenges frontline staff may be experiencing in delivering this in place of food parcels.

The importance of ensuring emergency support remains available for those who need it was stressed and, critically, that this support is rooted in the values of dignity and respect.

The consultation, direct experience workshops, community groups and local authority engagement have provided the information which has been used to shape the Plan.

Part 4 - Summary of assessment findings

As set out above, there is strong evidence that people who experience socio-economic disadvantage have a higher prevalence of household food insecurity and food bank use. This view has been informed by official statistics, evidence from frontline services, research publications, and consultation responses.

The actions outlined in the Plan³⁹ are underpinned by human rights principles and careful consideration has been given to reducing socio-economic inequalities. The Plan aims to ensure cash-first support is better coordinated, more accessible, and grounded in direct-experience. It sets out the nine actions we will take over the next three years, alongside others, that can have a positive impact now on how people facing crisis are supported and includes targeted support for those most likely to be impacted, including those facing socio-economic disadvantage.

Community, stakeholder, local authority and cross policy engagement has taken place to gather data across society of the impact of food insecurity. The feedback and the consultation responses shaped the cash-first programme which has been designed to allow ongoing development at a local level when any risks are identified throughout its delivery and enable mitigating actions to be implemented as appropriate.

We will continue to use data collected in national surveys, and by the Trussell Trust, IFAN and FareShare, to identify any socio-economic barriers, and share intelligence with local authorities to allow consideration of preventative support actions which they may be able to put in place.

Further changes may be considered throughout the lifespan of the Plan to align with the requirements of the Fairer Scotland Duty guidance⁴⁰. These may include investigation, with further evidence gathering and bespoke interventions, subject to local needs and circumstance.

³⁹ Scottish Government, Cash-First – Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland (2023) [Cash-First - towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland: plan - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/cash-first-towards-ending-the-need-for-food-banks-in-scotland/plan-2023/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

⁴⁰ Scottish Government, Fairer Scotland Duty – guidance for public bodies (2022) [Fairer Scotland Duty: guidance for public bodies - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-scotland-duty-guidance-for-public-bodies/pages/1-1-introduction.aspx)

Authorisation:

Name: Julie Humphreys

Job title: Deputy Director, Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing

Date: 28 June 2023



© Crown copyright 2023



This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence, visit nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3 or write to the Information Policy Team, The National Archives, Kew, London TW9 4DU, or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk.

Where we have identified any third party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

This publication is available at www.gov.scot

Any enquiries regarding this publication should be sent to us at

The Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG

ISBN: 978-1-83521-123-6 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, October 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1324862 (10/23)

W W W . g o v . s c o t