

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

## **Islands Communities Impact Assessment**

**October 2023**

## **Islands Communities Impact Assessment**

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

#### **Introduction**

This Island Communities Impact Assessment (ICIA) considers the impact of Cash-First: Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland hereafter known as “the Plan”.

This has been carried out in accordance with the provisions of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018<sup>1</sup> which creates a duty on Scottish Ministers and other relevant public bodies to have regard to island communities in exercising their functions and in the development of new policy, strategy or services which may, in their opinion, be likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities in Scotland.

The views in this summary have been informed by official statistics, academic publications, evidence from frontline services, and consultation responses.

---

<sup>1</sup> Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 - [Islands \(Scotland\) Act 2018 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

## Part 1 - Background and purpose

The Scottish Government's 2021 and 2022 Programmes for Government committed to publishing a Plan, grounded in human rights, that sets out the further action we will take to improve the response to hardship so as to reduce the need for food banks. This is a cornerstone of our commitment to tackling poverty, protecting and fulfilling the right to food and achieving our Good Food Nation ambition.

On 5 June 2023, the Scottish Government published Cash-First – Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland.<sup>2</sup> 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.

While food insecurity and food bank use occurs across urban, rural and island communities, there can be unique risks and barriers to accessing supports in some island communities that we consider further through this impact assessment.

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.<sup>3</sup> There were over 400 responses<sup>4</sup> and an independent analysis of views has been published.<sup>5</sup> 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.

Since then, the rising cost of living has caused more people to cut back, skip meals, seek assistance from food banks, and in extreme cases to go without food completely. Food bank networks are reporting unprecedented demand for their services, but have also indicated that some Scottish Government interventions such

---

<sup>2</sup> 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/pages/10/index.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> 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](https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-the-need-for-food-banks-a-draft-national-plan/pages/10/index.aspx)

<sup>4</sup> 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](https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-the-need-for-food-banks-published-consultation-responses/pages/10/index.aspx)

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Consultation analysis (2022) [Ending the need for food banks – draft plan: consultation analysis – gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/ending-the-need-for-food-banks-consultation-analysis/pages/10/index.aspx)

as the Scottish Child Payment may have helped to reduce need for some households.

The Trussell Trust's End of Year Statistics for 2022-23 found a significantly lower level of need for households with children in Scotland compared to England in the second half of the year.<sup>6</sup> They suggest that action in November 2022 to extend the Scottish Child Payment to include eligible children up to age 16 and the increase in value to £25 a week may have had an impact.

## **Part 2 - Who will be affected**

The direct beneficiaries of the Plan and its associated actions are people who experience financial crisis and require urgent assistance to access food and other essentials. There is evidence of higher prevalence of food insecurity and food bank use in certain household groups, including some protected characteristics<sup>7</sup> and those with low income. The Family Resources Survey<sup>8</sup> indicates that this includes:

- younger people;
- single adults;
- lone parents;
- larger households;
- disabled people;
- minority ethnic households;
- those in receipt of low income benefits; and
- tenants in the social rented sector

Organisations that provide assistance to those groups may be affected:

- Food banks may see a reduction in demand for their services.
- Local sources of emergency financial assistance such as the Scottish Welfare Fund may see an increase in the need for their services.
- Advice services may see an increase in demand or complexity of need.
- Organisations that refer people to food banks may notice changes to the referral landscape.
- Organisations that provide holistic wellbeing supports may notice changes to the referral landscape.

### **2.1 - Demographic island specific data**

There are six local authorities who represent island communities, as defined under the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018. These are: Argyll and Bute Council; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar / Western Isles; Highland Council; North Ayrshire Council; Orkney Islands Council; and Shetland Islands Council. Orkney, Shetland and Western Isles

---

<sup>6</sup> Trussell Trust: End year statistics 2022-23 (2023) [End of Year Stats - The Trussell Trust](#)

<sup>7</sup> Equality Act 2010 [Equality Act 2010 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> DWP, Family Resources Survey: financial year 2021-22 (2023) [Family Resources Survey – gov.uk \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

are entirely island authorities, while Highland, Argyll and Bute and North Ayrshire local authorities cover island regions as well as mainland regions.

Evidence suggests that the cost food and other essentials may be higher in some rural and island areas,<sup>9</sup> and that people may experience additional non-financial barriers to food in island communities linked to dispersed populations, limited food retail, irregular or disrupted transport, and weather related disruption. However, food insecurity data indicates that prevalence of food insecurity is often lower within these local authorities than the national average.<sup>10</sup>

The distribution of food banks and other food aid providers is generally understood to correlate with low income and deprivation, and there is at present no island-specific assessments of food bank distribution. The Rural Lives Report <sup>11</sup> suggests that as with in urban areas, food banks have increasingly become an important source of support in rural communities, both for crisis support but also for access to wider services and social connection. The Plan should be carefully implemented so as not to overlook the role of valued local services. In reducing the need for food banks, the Plan aims to reduce the need for their emergency food parcels by improving the response to financial hardship, including at a local level. The Plan recognises the importance of holistic support and the contribution that community organisations can make to household wellbeing and the local resilience.

## **2.2 - Different experiences between island communities**

The Scottish Health Survey<sup>12</sup> indicates that nationally around 9% of households worry about affording food. The local disaggregation of this suggests that island areas generally report lower levels of food insecurity – at around 7% in Argyll and Bute, 7% in Na h-Eileanan Siar, 6% in Highland, 8% in North Ayrshire, 5% in Orkney and 5% in Shetland.

These figures are subject to a margin of error (95% confidence interval) which may be more pronounced for areas with a smaller sample size. This locally disaggregated data on food insecurity is broadly consistent with existing evidence on deprivation. It is not possible to further disaggregate data to individual island communities.

The Trussell Trust<sup>13</sup> and the Independent Food Aid Network<sup>14</sup> have not reported any differential experiences amongst food banks in their networks between island communities though this could be a data gap that would benefit from further exploration.

---

<sup>9</sup> Scottish Government, Poverty in Rural Scotland Evidence Review (2021) [Supporting documents - Poverty in rural Scotland: evidence review - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

<sup>10</sup> Scottish Government, Scottish Health Survey, combined local authority data 2017-2021 (2022) [Scottish Health Survey \(shinyapps.io\)](#)

<sup>11</sup> University of Newcastle, Impact Hub Inverness, Scotland's Rural College, Standard Life Foundation (2021) [Rural Lives - understanding financial hardship and vulnerability in rural areas](#)

<sup>12</sup> Scottish Government, Scottish Health Survey, combined local authority data 2017-2021 (2022) [Scottish Health Survey \(shinyapps.io\)](#)

<sup>13</sup> Trussell Trust: End year statistics 2022-23 (2023) [End of Year Stats - The Trussell Trust](#)

<sup>14</sup> Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) statistical data [Data | IFAN \(foodaidnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-2022<sup>15</sup> data provides a snapshot over three yearly periods of the increase in poverty for both urban and rural households. In 2007-2010 there were 150,000 rural households in relative poverty, however this increased by 70,000 to 220,000 by 2019-2022, an increase of 47%. For the same period the number of rural households in severe poverty rose from 100,000 to 150,000, an increase of 50%.

### 2.3 - Existing design features and mitigations

Existing nation-wide interventions to tackle food insecurity during the first two years of the pandemic provided local decision-makers with flexibility to adapt interventions to reflect local needs and this has enabled island authorities to reflect local priorities in the delivery of support.<sup>16</sup>

Monitoring of local authority spend from the Winter Support Fund and Financial Insecurity Fund indicated that a range of support was put in place, including:

- Establishing discretionary funds to meet unique rural and island needs.
- Provision of cash payments to alleviate higher fuel costs due to type of heating systems installed in some island communities.
- Issued “cosy home” packages which included blankets, heaters, hot water bottles.
- Additional funding to improve referral pathways to income maximisation and holistic support.

Some additional island-specific supports were also put in place that contribute toward tackling food insecurity, this includes:

- The Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Fund provided local authorities with funding to strengthen existing schemes and put in place new supports to support those struggling with rising living costs. Argyll and Bute targeted some of their resource to support additional cash transfers for pupils eligible for Free School Meals on the basis of low income.
- The Community Led Local Development Fund is supporting over 380 community projects in rural and island communities and includes action to address poverty and food insecurity.

Some island communities have specific strategies and interventions to tackle food insecurity and the need for food banks. This includes Orkney’s Food Dignity Recommendations which sets out the practical actions local partners will take and

---

<sup>15</sup>Scottish Government, Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-2022, table 15 [Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2019-22 \(data.gov.scot\)](#)

<sup>16</sup> Scottish Government, Financial Insecurity Fund 2020-2021 (2021) [Activities delivered - Local action to tackle food insecurity: summary of activities, trends and learning - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](#)

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

include developing an “every door a right door” pathway to improve household financial resilience.<sup>17</sup>

### Part 3 - Consultation and engagement

A draft Plan was published for consultation between 20 October 2021 and 25 January 2022<sup>18</sup> There were over 400 responses,<sup>19</sup> and an independent analysis of views has been published.<sup>20</sup> Officials have also engaged directly with local authority leads, and organisations involved in responding to financial hardship across Scotland, including in island communities. The Steering Group on Ending the Need for Food Banks also includes representation from a local authority with island communities.

While the consultation did not contain specific questions on how island communities experience food insecurity, a number of respondents provided views from an island perspective. Additional supplementary evidence has been sought, including specific questions on risks, barriers and opportunities in island communities which have been raised through engagement with island local authority areas, the Islands Strategic Group and organisations responding to food insecurity that deliver services in island communities.

A number of local authorities representing island communities responded to the consultation<sup>21</sup>, and reflected on the specific existing issues that can exacerbate the experience of food insecurity in island communities. In addition to a higher cost of living in island communities, respondents often highlighted challenges linked to non-financial barriers to accessing food e.g. transport links and weather related disruption.

“As an authority with two inhabited islands, the vagaries of weather, tide and ferries often disrupt supply or cause panic-buying and food availability for the most vulnerable results in a need for emergency food provision.”<sup>22</sup>  
– North Ayrshire Council.

---

<sup>17</sup> Voluntary Action Orkney; Food Dignity Strategy Project (2022) [Consultant – Community-led Food Dignity Project - VAO Orkney \(vaorkney.org.uk\)](https://vaorkney.org.uk)

<sup>18</sup> 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](#)

<sup>19</sup> 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](#)

<sup>20</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Consultation analysis (2022) [Ending the need for food banks - draft plan: consultation analysis - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot)

<sup>21</sup> 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](#)

<sup>22</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Published consultation responses (2022) [Response 124163111 to Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

“It is important that local circumstances and context are taken into account, for example a limited presence of national charities in this area, geographic dispersal, access to shops for any voucher scheme, and the higher cost of living in remote rural areas.”<sup>23</sup>

– Shetland Island Council.

The Orkney Food Dignity Partnership which brings together statutory and third sector partners to tackle food insecurity across Orkney shared similar reflections, noting:

“A higher cost of living than on mainland Scotland, with, among other factors, higher energy, freight, and travel costs. These costs are even higher for our ferry-linked isle residents, particularly for residents who rely on island shops where the cost of food is often significantly higher.”<sup>24</sup>

Reflecting on solutions, Bute Advice Centre identified that cash-first and other opportunities that maintain dignity are important but should be adapted to meet local circumstances.

“Recognition of the access and cost of food challenges faced by individuals in more rural locations should also be a factor in looking at solutions. The promotion of a cash first approach is usually a more dignified approach. The financial challenges faced by families who rely on seasonal work in rural/island locations, with fluctuating incomes whilst living in local communities who don't recognise that poverty exists can be problematic. Finding ways to support households that retain the individual's dignity is critical.”<sup>25</sup>

The Orkney Food Dignity Partnership also highlighted the importance of whole system solutions – particularly in ferry-linked isles where longer food supply chains can inhibit access to nutritional fresh food at an affordable price.

FareShare is a charitable organisation that redistributes surplus food to community organisations in all local authority areas in Scotland. They note the additional cost and time pressure in supplying food to organisations in island communities, and the importance of being sensitive to not displacing or undermining local food economies which support local jobs.

---

<sup>23</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Published consultation responses (2022) [Response 554732896 to Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>24</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Published consultation responses (2022) [Response 283360153 to Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)

<sup>25</sup> Scottish Government, Ending the Need for Food Banks: Published consultation responses (2022) [Response 259539598 to Ending the need for food banks: a draft national plan - Scottish Government consultations - Citizen Space](#)



### **3.1 - Is your consultation robust and meaningful and sufficient to comply with the Section 7 duty?**

Yes. While the consultation did not ask specific questions on issues faced in island communities, supplementary direct engagement with island local authority leads and organisations responding to food insecurity have helped to identify risks, barriers and opportunities to be considered in the development and delivery of the Plan and associated actions.

#### **Part 4 - Assessment of impact**

The primary driver of food insecurity and food bank use across Scotland is understood to be insufficient and insecure income. While island communities have reported a lower overall prevalence of food insecurity, the nature and complexity of both financial and non-financial barriers to food in island settings will require consideration throughout the delivery of the Plan.

Some of the non-financial barriers identified in island communities such as limited access to affordable retail can also be experienced in rural mainland communities, for example in the Scottish Borders, Dumfries and Galloway, and Aberdeenshire. However, some factors such as transport disruption can be a heightened risk in island communities. While these barriers are not directly the focus of the actions identified in the Plan, providing delivery partners with flexibility to respond to local circumstances will help the Plan to better meet the needs of different communities across Scotland.

#### **Part 5 - Assessment of whether a full Islands Communities Impact Assessment is required**

While there are factors that are already present and may contribute to different experiences of food insecurity in island communities from mainland, the Plan and associated actions are not expected to have a significantly different impact in these communities. A full Islands Community Impact Assessment is therefore not required.

#### **Part 6 - Making adjustment to your work**

The needs of island communities will continue to be considered through delivery of the Plan and associated actions over the next three years.

National action will continue to provide flexibility to adapt to local circumstances where appropriate, including through the delivery of discretionary supports such as the Scottish Welfare Fund. The Plan will support targeted local test and learn activities through the Cash-First Programme and Citizens Advice Scotland crisis response pilot, and these activities will be delivered in at least one island local authority area, subject to the receipt of a suitable proposal.

We will continue to review data on the prevalence of food insecurity in island communities through the Scottish Health Survey, and through direct engagement with island local authorities and service providers.

## **AUTHORISATION OF ICIA**

ICIA approved by: Julie Humphreys

Position: Deputy Director, Tackling Child Poverty and Financial Wellbeing

Date approved 28 June 2023



© Crown copyright 2023

**OGL**

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](https://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](mailto: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](http://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: 978-1-83521-122-9 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, October 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA  
PPDAS1324882 (10/23)

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