

Cash-First:

Towards Ending the Need
for Food Banks in Scotland



Contents

Ministerial Foreword	3
Introduction	5
Part A – Taking Action	6
Our human rights approach	6
Scottish Government approach to tackling food insecurity	6
Action so far	7
The challenge we face today	10
Snapshot of who is most impacted	10
Responding now and the longer-term ambition	11
Part B – Action Over the Next Three Years to Improve the Response to Crisis	12
Part C – Longer-Term Action to Prevent Food Insecurity	18
Conclusion	20
Definitions	21



Ministerial Foreword

The Scottish Government's ambition is for a Scotland without the need for food banks. A Scotland where everyone has sufficient money to access the essentials they need with dignity and choice. Achieving this requires action by the Scottish Government and our partners to improve how we respond to financial hardship, and to prevent it from happening in the first place.

Food banks were initially set up to provide short-term support to people in an emergency. Despite the best efforts of the Scottish Government, it is disappointing that the need for food banks is now greater than ever. The current spiralling cost of living is forcing record numbers to make desperate decisions: cutting back on essentials; choosing between heating or eating; and turning to food banks to feed themselves and their families.

Poverty and the cost of living crisis is the biggest challenge facing this country - one that has been exacerbated by some of the UK Government's actions and inactions.

The safety net which social security provides has never been more important, and yet researchers, food charities, and independent experts have all repeatedly highlighted the damaging impacts of UK Government policies, welfare cuts, and lack of action to tackle the cost of living crisis in driving demand for food banks which have, for some people, become a necessary lifeline to ensure they can feed themselves and their families.

The Scottish Government takes a very different approach and we have pledged to use every power at our disposal to protect the vulnerable in our society – particularly as the cost of living crisis puts additional pressure on household budgets. We have pledged to continue to tackle poverty in all its forms and improve the life chances of people across our country, with our aim being to protect the people of Scotland as far as possible from the harm inflicted by UK Government policies and the ongoing cost of living crisis.

We have taken forward bold measures to boost incomes and protect households against food insecurity. We consider social security to be an investment in people and a means of alleviating poverty and that is why we uprated all of the benefits we deliver by 10.1% in April this year, ensuring our support keeps step with rising costs. Our unique Scottish Child Payment, one of five family Scottish Government benefits, offers financial support to families which is unparalleled across the UK and food banks suggest that this may have already helped to slow the pace of demand for their services in Scotland. But our support goes much wider than this, reaching households in need through mitigating UK government policies with Discretionary Housing Payments, and reducing the burden of council tax through our Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

While our deliberate focus on supporting people in need through our policy choices has boosted incomes and helped protect households against hardship, we do not have the full powers required to reverse the damaging impact of decades of UK Government decisions to truly end the need for food banks. Yet we can and must do more to reduce the need for their services.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S Anne Somerville'.

Shirley-Anne Somerville
Cabinet Secretary
for Social Justice

At this challenging time, this Plan presents our long-term ambition for a Scotland without the need for food banks. It outlines some of the targeted steps we will collectively take over the next three years to move us closer to this by improving the response to financial hardship.

When someone faces financial crisis and needs immediate support to access essentials like food, the response should be fast, coordinated, and meet their needs with dignity and respect. Therefore this Plan, which the Trussell Trust and Independent Food Aid Network describe as “unprecedented”, makes clear our commitment to cash-first responses to food insecurity. The actions aim to ensure cash-first support is better coordinated, more accessible, and grounded in direct experience. They also build on learning from great examples of partnership working during the pandemic, and our ongoing action to tackle child poverty. This Plan will ensure we improve access to emergency payments alongside money advice and wider support to protect people in financial crisis.

While Scotland is the first part of the UK to commit to ending the need for food banks in the longer term, we need the UK Government to use their powers to take concerted action for this ambition to be realised, or Scotland needs the full powers of a normal nation to end poverty.

Until that time, as discussed at the Anti-Poverty Summit convened by the First Minister in May, we have further tough choices to make to ensure we support people in need and tackle inequalities. Poverty is neither accidental nor inevitable and the distressing levels of hunger and hardship that exist must be tackled. The Scottish Government will do that using our fixed budget and limited powers and taking forward a range of actions from those in Best Start, Bright Futures to those in this Plan, to ensure our focus on equality, opportunity and community is fully realised.



Introduction

The rising cost of living is causing more people to cut back, skip meals, seek assistance from food banks, and in extreme cases to go without food completely. There is strong evidence that compromising on food can have significant impacts on both physical and mental health.

Being able to afford the food we need to stay healthy and happy is a cornerstone of the right to food and our Good Food Nation ambition. We believe that a Scotland without the need for food banks is possible. This is our ambition, and it is one that is shared by food bank networks, but getting there will take time, collective action and the right powers.

The economic situation we find ourselves in remains exceptionally difficult and the rising cost of living and UK Government policy decisions in this context are contributing to further hardship. The reality is that we do not have the full powers or resources required to truly bring about an end in the need for food banks in the short term, but collectively we intend to do more to reduce the need for their services.

Recognising the challenges we face, this Plan focuses on the actions we will take over the next three years, that can have a positive impact now on how people facing financial crisis are supported. It also sets out the core human rights principles that will shape our journey towards a Scotland without the need for food banks. This Plan represents the next phase of this journey, though we will have further tough decisions to make.

By strengthening availability, coordination and access to cash-first support now, we can help get money into people's pockets when they face crisis, backed up by advice and support to help maximise their incomes and prevent the crisis happening again. These actions will help make food banks the last port of call in an emergency, and are a key step towards achieving our longer-term ambition.

This Plan is aimed at the policy makers, services and organisations that support people experiencing financial hardship. We all have a role to play. The work delivered through this Plan will produce valuable learning about how local support systems can be adapted and how services can work together differently to improve access to cash and wider help in a crisis. We will share this learning to help inform decision-making among local authorities and their partners, as well as other national and local organisations, around how they can work together to tackle food insecurity. Collectively, we can respond to hardship more effectively but also help to prevent it from happening in the first place.



Part A – Taking Action

Our human rights approach

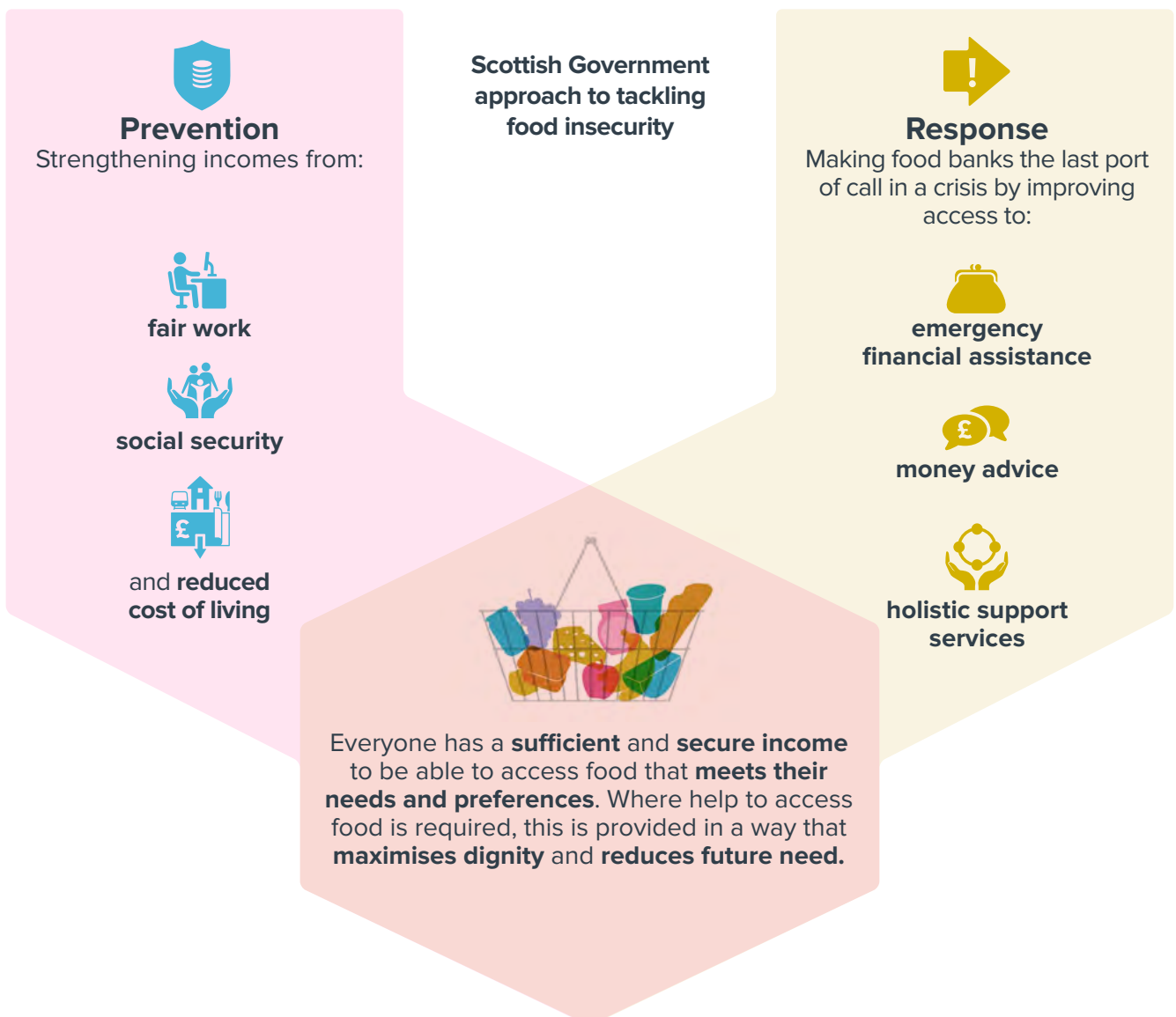
The Scottish Government is committed to respecting and fulfilling human rights and that includes the right to food. As part of the right to an adequate standard of living, people need to be able to access food that meets their dietary, social and cultural needs.

We recognise that the main reason why some people are compromising on food is insufficient and insecure incomes. Increasingly, when someone experiences financial hardship, a referral to a food bank is often the simplest route to meeting their immediate needs. While the compassion shown is commendable, we are clear that food banks are not an appropriate or long term response to poverty. Where they are the first

or only port of call, opportunities to strengthen income and prevent future hardship can be missed.

There is shared consensus across Scotland, including among food banks and other food aid providers, that a human rights approach is needed to ensure that everyone can afford an adequate diet. This will require all of us to take co-ordinated rights-based steps to improve the response to crisis, as well as preventative actions to secure household incomes for the longer term.

The diagram below summarises our human rights approach:



Action so far

In 2015 the Scottish Government established an Independent Working Group to provide advice on tackling food insecurity. The Group's [Dignity Report](#) contained 19 recommendations, underpinned by a set of Dignity Principles. Significant progress has been made on these priorities which have helped to develop and strengthen the delivery of our human rights approach to food insecurity.

Major steps have been taken by the Scottish Government to increase incomes by promoting fair work and improving the value of social security, notably through bold measures such as the Scottish Child Payment and the real living wage. Our investments have also helped to reduce household costs across a range of services – including childcare, housing and healthcare, as well as free school meals, bus travel, digital devices and period products.

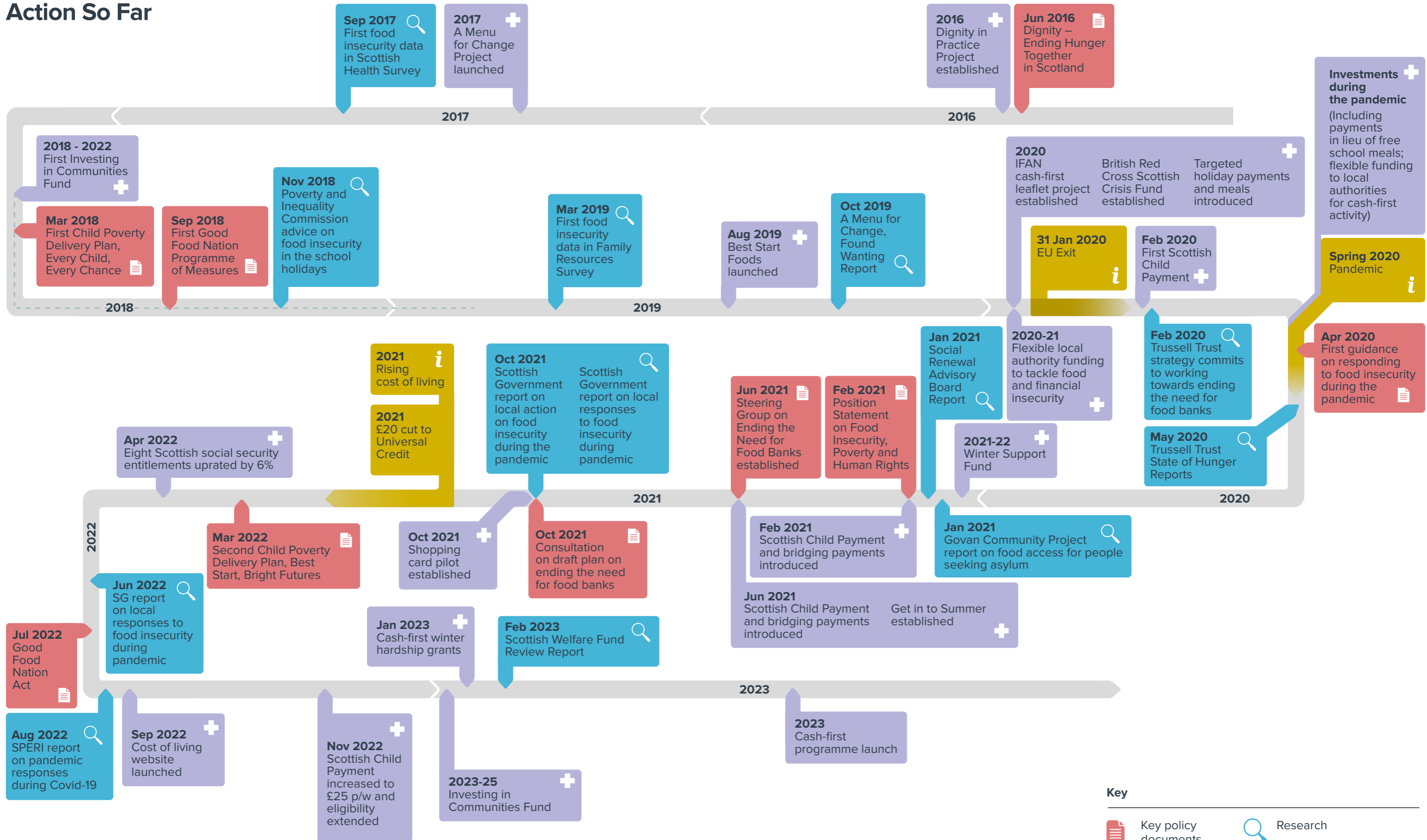
We have improved the response to crisis, including by protecting the Scottish Welfare Fund and working with community food organisations to put dignity at the heart of their activities. We were the first nation in the UK to routinely measure food insecurity and have strengthened our evidence base on what works.

Our Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 set out a high-level framework for our food system, and we will soon consult on our Human Rights Bill which will incorporate four international human rights treaties into Scots Law subject to devolved competence. We have made tackling child poverty a national mission and have published [two delivery plans](#), backed by significant investment, to drive progress towards our statutory targets.

The Scottish Government's ambition is for a Scotland without the need for food banks, and this is a view shared by the two largest food bank networks in Scotland. Both the Trussell Trust and the Independent Food Aid Network have stated their commitment to working towards ending the need for their services. Last year, our consultation on a draft plan on ending the need for food banks indicated strong support for this ambition from a wide range of stakeholders, including from food banks and people with direct experience of using their services. An [independent analysis](#) of consultation responses found broad agreement around the importance of cash-first responses to crisis and the need for measures to boost incomes, and this is reflected through the actions in this Plan. Respondents also asked for clear timescales and adequate resource to deliver.



Action So Far



Key

- Key policy documents
- Research
- Investments/Interventions
- Context

The challenge we face today

Despite these significant steps forward, tackling household food insecurity is a far greater challenge today than it was in 2015. The damage caused by the global Covid-19 pandemic and ongoing negative economic impacts of a hard Brexit and UK policies, as well as Russia's invasion of Ukraine, have all contributed to spiralling inflation, huge rises in energy prices and increasing costs for food and other essentials. This has created a cost of living crisis not seen in a generation.

While the inflationary uplift for a number of UK Government social security entitlements from April 2023 has been welcome, there is evidence that wider UK Government policies are contributing to destitution and pressure on food banks. Despite [DWP data](#) indicating that the £20 Universal Credit uplift may have contributed to a significant reduction in food insecurity for recipients, down from 43% in 2019-20 to 27% in 2020-21, the UK Government chose not to retain this uplift at a time when household costs and inflation were already rising. The built-in delays and sanctions can leave people without any money at all, and this is worse still for people who have No Recourse to Public Funds.

Demand for food banks has increased considerably across the UK. The Trussell Trust's [annual data](#) show a record 259,744 emergency food parcels were given out by their network in Scotland in 2022-23 – a 30% increase compared to 2021-22. The sustained demand has at times led to food banks reporting that they may run out

of food, and many have had to reduce the size of the parcels they provide. We know people tend to only seek a parcel at times of extreme need and the Trussell Trust has identified that [95% of people referred to their food banks are destitute](#).

The Scottish Government recognises the pressure on household budgets and is making different choices with the limited powers and fixed budget we have. That is why in both 2022-23 and 2023-24, we have allocated almost [£3 billion to support policies which tackle poverty and to protect people](#) as far as possible during the ongoing cost of living crisis. This includes measures that do not exist elsewhere in the UK such as the Scottish Child Payment. The Trussell Trust suggest that Scottish Government action is having a positive impact, and that the extension of Scottish Child Payment eligibility to under-16s and increase in value to £25 per week – a 150% increase – [may have helped to slow the pace of demand](#) on their network. Scotland saw a smaller increase in the number of parcels provided for children in the second half of the year (November 22 – March 23) compared with the rest of the UK (a 17% increase in Scotland compared to 42% in England).

Despite our commitment to driving forward changes to help tackle poverty, inflation has also affected our own budget, which fell by 10% in real terms between 2021 and 2022. As a country and as a Government we face extraordinary challenges when it comes to tackling the cost of living crisis and supporting those most impacted.

Snapshot of who is most impacted



Responding now and the longer-term ambition

There has never been a more important time for action, grounded in human rights, to improve the support available to people when they face financial crisis. Anyone involved in responses to financial hardship will know the devastating impact that compromising on food can have, and in order to make a real difference, all of us must work together and grasp every opportunity for improvement.

This Plan details some of the targeted actions we will take together over the next three years, but the economic context remains fluid and we will likely need to do more. Our work will be guided by three overarching objectives.

The actions in this Plan seek to improve the response to crisis and start to reduce the need for emergency food parcels. They are an important step towards achieving our longer-term ambition of a Scotland without the need for food banks. We will continue to pursue this ambition to the fullest of our power and resources, and will maintain pressure on the UK Government to act accordingly.



**Strengthen
access to cash
in a crisis**



**Integrate money
advice to prevent
future need**



**Maximise dignity
and choice when
food is provided**

Part B – Action Over the Next Three Years to Improve the Response to Crisis

When someone faces financial crisis and needs immediate support to access essentials like food, the response should be fast, coordinated, and meet their needs with dignity and respect.

Ready access to emergency cash payments enables people to buy the food and other essentials that meet their needs and preferences. When emergency cash is provided alongside appropriate advice, people can be supported to ensure they are accessing all of their entitlements and helped to resolve any issues in order to prevent the crisis from happening again, for example by securing increased income from benefits. Once that immediate support is in place, appropriate referrals to wider support, including local community support, can help meet wider needs and reduce the isolation often caused by poverty. Moving towards cash-first in practice will take time, and where help to access food is still needed this should be provided in a way that maximises dignity and choice.

Working alongside and enabling our local partners, the Scottish Government will take forward nine actions over the next three years to help improve the response to crisis and reduce the need for emergency food parcels. We will work to share the learning from these new activities to support decision-making and service design among local authorities and their partners, as well as other national and local organisations, to tackle food insecurity collaboratively.

Action 1: We will support new local partnership work to deliver cash-first

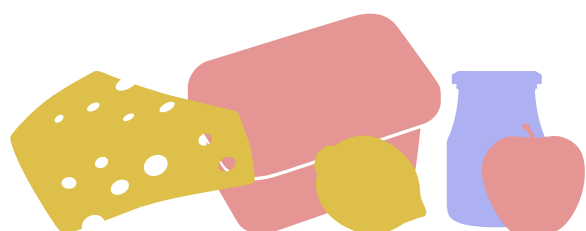
Strengthened collaboration between the public and third sectors during the first years of the pandemic has already demonstrated that it is possible to improve access to cash in a crisis, and improve longer-term outcomes for those supported.

Case study. Argyll and Bute Council is working in partnership with advice services and the community food sector to deliver a new cash-first support that was initially established using Scottish Government pandemic response funding: the [Flexible Food Fund](#). The Fund provides people who are struggling with essentials with two discretionary payments over a four-to-six-week period, alongside money advice and holistic support. More than 1,500 people have been helped so far, with an average financial gain of £1,300 beyond the value of the Flexible Food Fund payment.

Building on learning from this work, and other good practice, we will establish a new £1.8 million Cash-First Programme. Following a competitive process, funding and practical assistance will be awarded to up to eight area-based partnerships to strengthen cash-first responses to financial hardship, helping to reduce the need for emergency food parcels.

Each partnership will be provided with up to £200,000 over 24 months to recruit a coordinator and take forward improvement projects. Partnerships will receive support through a peer-learning programme which will also share good practice.

Linked to this, we will also work with partners, including Public Health Scotland, NHS Scotland and local authorities, to ensure robust pathways are in place locally to meet the particular needs of families with infants under 1 facing financial crisis. These pathways will build on existing good practice, maximising access to appropriate emergency help and wider advice and support, while reducing the need for food banks.



Action 2: We will expand testing of new models that provide immediate assistance

Last year, the Scottish Government worked with Citizens Advice Scotland and seven Citizens Advice Bureaux to pilot the use of shopping cards as an alternative to food bank referrals. Shopping cards are not a long-term solution to hunger and destitution; however, there is good [evidence from this pilot](#) that those who received a card found it a valuable crisis support, and that this helped to unlock access to wider entitlements. The shopping cards are provided as an immediate crisis response with proportionate eligibility and assessment processes. The aim is to complement but not replace existing statutory support such as the Scottish Welfare Fund where there is urgent need.

Case study. Bureaux advisors provided clients who would have been offered a food bank referral with the option of a card, alongside their wider holistic support offer. A total of 772 households were supported through this pilot with the majority receiving holistic advice and half of those benefitting financially – with an average of £1,630 financial gain. Those supported by cards expressed a strong preference for cards over a food parcel, with many reflecting on the dignity, choice and flexibility a card provided.

We will build on the learning to date through funding of £290,000 in 2023-24 for an expanded crisis response pilot with Citizens Advice Scotland and nine local bureaux. In particular, this will test the use of cash grants as an alternative to cards where locally appropriate, and will generate evidence on specific barriers to cash-first in rural and remote communities.

Action 3: We will improve access to advice in accessible settings

In 2023-24, we will invest over £11.7 million to support the delivery of free welfare, debt and income maximisation advice across Scotland. This includes investment in the Money Talk Team service, delivered by Citizens Advice Scotland and the Citizens Advice Bureau network.

We are also committed to increasing the availability of advice within services that people already access. To support this we are investing at least £3.5 million over this parliamentary term in Welfare Advice and Health Partnerships. These partnerships integrate welfare and debt advisers within GP surgeries, helping to reduce pressure on GPs and primary care services and allowing them to focus on clinical care while a dedicated adviser supports the individual to address their social and economic needs. We will build on the success of these partnerships and increase access to advice through investment of up to £2 million over two years in other accessible places including wider health settings, education and community settings.

Case study. The Trussell Trust will invest in six local test and learn pilot projects in Scotland to improve access to and engagement with advice services over the next two years, building on and complementing existing local services. These models will go beyond food bank advice provision – with community-led design to build in longer-term sustainability. In addition, Trussell Trust funded specialist advice services are now being provided in sixteen local authority areas in Scotland.

This will complement the significant local investment by local authorities in providing advice and work by partners, including the Trussell Trust.

Action 4: We will support wellbeing through community food approaches

Improving how we respond to food insecurity means taking action that meets immediate food needs whilst also considering the wider wellbeing of the whole household. Responding to crisis in a coordinated, person-centred way enables local services to promote dignity and improve outcomes for the longer term. Community food organisations have a clear role to play in promoting wellbeing and providing person-centred support to people experiencing food insecurity, including vital social contact.

We will provide direct funding to community and third sector organisations responding to food insecurity through our Investing in Communities Fund (ICF). ICF is a three-year fund being delivered from 1 April 2023 to 31 March 2026 and will invest around £10 million each year in local organisations working to tackle poverty and inequality; developing place-based approaches; supporting community-led regeneration; and working to ensure a just transition to net zero. Through this fund we will support 31 organisations whose activities specifically include tackling food insecurity. We will engage with them to support learning and sharing of good practice in delivery of cash-first and dignified approaches.

We will provide funding of £50,000 this year for wider support through community food networks and Public Health Scotland who run Community Food and Health Scotland. Working together with these networks, we will pilot the use of cash-first tools to address food insecurity within community food settings. A further £25,000 will be allocated to the Scottish Pantry Network to provide training, advice and support to pantries within the network on how to increase access to cash-first and embed the Dignity Principles.

We will continue to provide funding of £315,000 in 2023-24 to FareShare in Scotland, which supports hundreds of community organisations to access high quality surplus food with an emphasis on community development and access to wider services. We will also support them to promote cash-first tools and the Dignity Principles throughout their network.

Action 5: We will continue to support cash-first models that are inclusive

We have provided funding totalling almost £880,000 over the past two years to the British Red Cross to provide crisis hardship support to people facing destitution. Through a network of referral partners, their Scottish Crisis Fund provides vital crisis cash support, as well as advice and advocacy to those most at risk of destitution in Scotland, including those who may be otherwise ineligible for government support.

We will continue to support the delivery of the Scottish Crisis Fund, through funding of £623,000 in 2023-24, to provide a route to crisis support that is inclusive of people with No Recourse to Public Funds. This links to the commitments outlined in our [Ending Destitution Together](#) Strategy.

We will also continue to engage with the Home Office, calling on them to improve support available to people with No Recourse to Public Funds, including allowing them to apply to the Scottish Welfare Fund.

Action 6: We will make it easier to refer to cash-first support

In order to make it easier for frontline workers to refer someone experiencing hardship to local cash-first support rather than a food bank, the Scottish Government has provided funding to the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) to develop cash-first referral leaflets and other practical resources. Locally tailored leaflets are now [available in every local authority area](#) in Scotland.

An [independent evaluation](#) published in June 2021 found that the leaflets were a useful tool for raising awareness of local sources of cash-first support amongst staff, volunteers and people experiencing hardship.

We will support IFAN with funding of £55,000 this year to increase the accessibility of the leaflets through additional translations and formats, and will work with partners to maximise their impact through earlier intervention points, including through Jobcentres and Social Security Scotland.

Action 7: We will maintain investment in the Scottish Welfare Fund and work with partners to produce an Action Plan to deliver improvements

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) provides discretionary local welfare assistance in the form of Crisis Grants to households experiencing financial hardship. The SWF budget for 2023-24 is £41 million: £35.5 million for grants and £5.5 million for administration. This is our leading source of cash-first emergency assistance, and food continues to be the most commonly awarded Crisis Grant item, with [over 163,000 awards made in 2021-22](#) totalling £12.4 million.

Case study. North Lanarkshire Council has developed a referral gateway, encouraging local services and groups to refer people in need of crisis support to the Scottish Welfare Fund in the first instance. Through their recently launched Cash-First Pledge, organisations commit to working with the Scottish Welfare Fund and advice services to ensure cash-first support is in place alongside support to identify sustainable solutions to food insecurity.

The Scottish Government commissioned the [Independent Review of the Scottish Welfare Fund](#), published in March 2023, which highlights the importance of the fund as a national safety net. To further strengthen this safety net, we will act on the findings of the Review and assess future sustainability of the Fund. We will take action to ensure grants are delivered consistently, effectively and efficiently. We have established a Policy Advisory Group to inform an action plan to make improvements to the Fund to ensure it continues to deliver for those in need.

Action 8: We will continue to listen to the direct experience of people

In March 2023, the Cross-Party Group on Poverty published a [report on poverty-related stigma](#) which recommended that policy-making is informed by people with direct experience of poverty, a recommendation that is already being delivered in relation to food insecurity policy.

The Scottish Government has funded Nourish Scotland and the Poverty Truth Community to facilitate a [Dignity Peer Network](#). They deliver workshops and develop tools and resources on how to engage with the Independent Working Group's Dignity Principles on a practical level and have supported hundreds of organisations to place dignity at the centre of what they do. This includes advice on how to involve people in decision-making, how to develop projects that are welcoming and free from stigma, and how to celebrate the social role of food in building communities. In this way the project has helped improve practice in relation to the role communities have to play in responding to food insecurity.

“In 2016, we were about to open a food bank; we then got hold of the ‘Dignity in Practice: Learning, Tools and guidance for community food providers’ report, which provided the tools for us to change the way we approached food provision. It gave us the opportunity to build a more inclusive project that transformed the whole community of Kyle of Sutherland.”

Dignity in Practice participant

We will continue to support the Dignity Peer Network of community food practitioners to share learning, experience and expertise about embedding the Dignity Principles into their daily work with funding of £55,000 in 2023-24. This will deliver awareness-raising and skill-sharing around cash-first approaches and sources of support.

We will continue to work with Govan Community Project and their community members to increase public awareness of the needs of people in the asylum process and help to maintain dignity when accessing community food supports. This will build on the report and tools developed by their Participatory Action Research group.

We will also continue to work with MECOPP and Gypsy/Traveller community members to increase their access to and involvement in the design of dignified responses to food insecurity, including through on-site pilot activities.

Over the next year we will invest a total of £100,000 in these inclusive projects, that also contribute to Action 5.

Action 9: We will work with other funders to put shared values into practice

Delivery of this Plan requires every organisation working in relation to food insecurity to pull together towards the same long term aim. There has been good progress over recent years in how third sector funders support food insecurity activity, particularly in relation to promoting good practice in cash-first responses.

Case study. The Scottish Government and the National Lottery Community Fund have provided the Corra Foundation with [funding over the past two years](#) to provide small grant awards to community groups to deliver cash-first support directly to people facing food insecurity and related financial hardship. Between November 2021 and February 2022, £750,000 was distributed to 174 community groups across Scotland, reaching over 21,000 people.

We will continue to work collaboratively with other funders, including the National Lottery Community Fund, Robertson Trust and Corra Foundation to put into practice shared values of human rights when funding projects that respond to food insecurity. This will involve learning from good practice on promoting principles of dignity and cash-first and reflecting on the challenges and opportunities for rights-based interventions posed by current needs brought about by the pandemic and the cost of living crisis.

As a first step, we will engage with funded organisations, the wider funding sector, and people with lived experience of food insecurity, to better understand their needs and priorities in order to strengthen rights-based action on food insecurity across Scotland.

Summary of the nine actions to improve response to crisis



Cash-First Programme



Testing new models



Advice in accessible settings



Wellbeing through community food



Scottish Crisis Fund



Cash-first leaflets and tools



Scottish Welfare Fund



Listening to direct experience



Human rights funding

Part C – Longer-Term Action to Prevent Food Insecurity

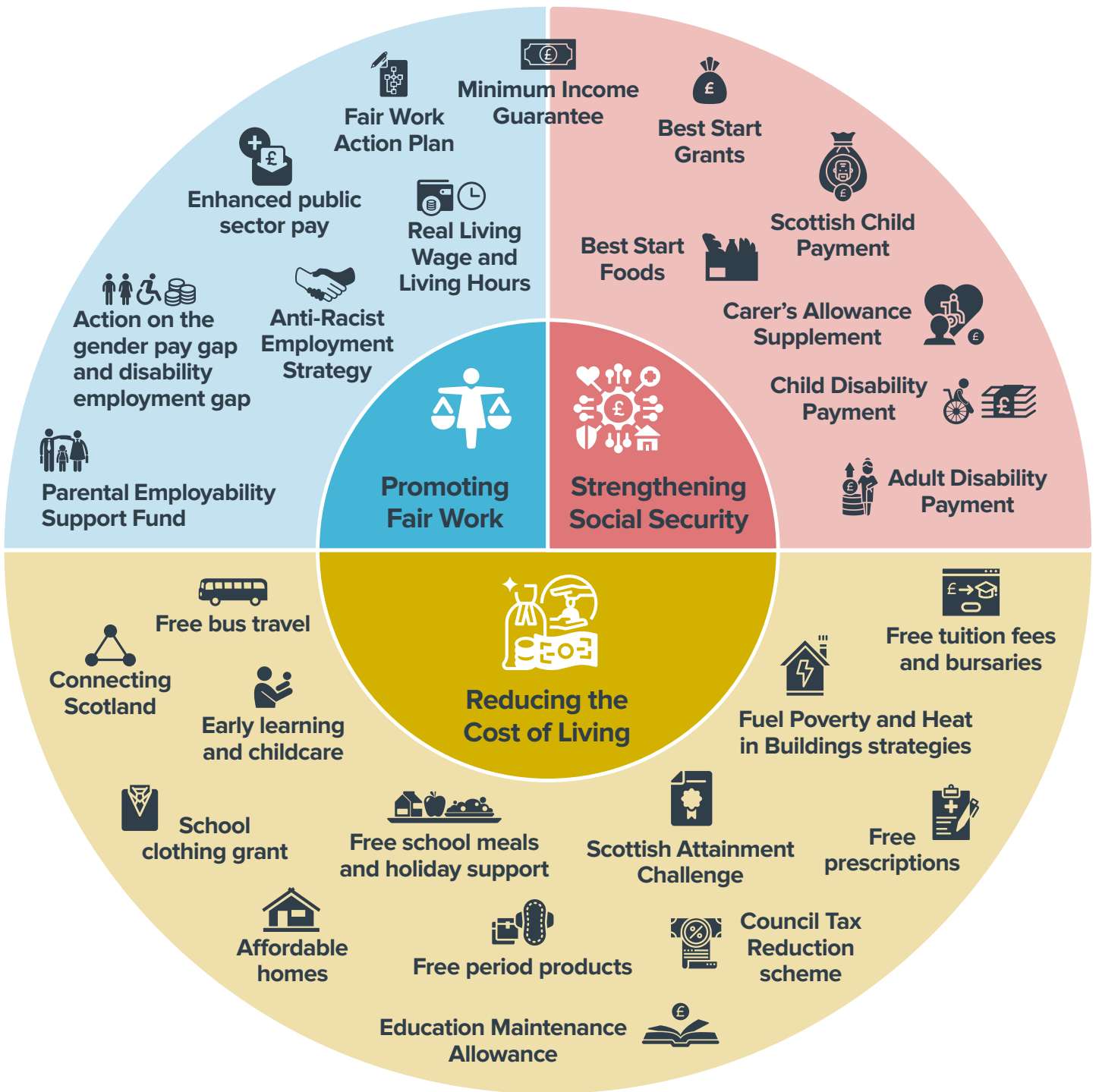
While improving our response to household financial crisis is crucial, particularly given the current cost of living crisis, it is action to ensure adequate and secure household incomes that will provide a long-term solution to food insecurity.

The Scottish Government will continue to use the powers we have to deliver bold measures to reduce poverty and inequality. In 2023-24 we will invest over £5.2 billion in social security payments to over one million people – £776 million above the level of funding received from the UK Government. In addition we will invest £84 million in Discretionary Housing Payments to mitigate the benefit cap, the bedroom tax and other UK Government welfare cuts and £450 million in our Council Tax Reduction scheme that means over 450,000 households do not have to pay council tax they cannot afford. We will also continue to provide free early learning and childcare, free school meals, school clothing grants and free prescriptions amongst other policies that all help leave more money in people's pockets to afford essentials.

We continue to call on the UK Government to use their powers to strengthen household incomes. This includes calling for reinstatement of the Universal Credit uplift at £25 per week, extended to all means-tested benefits, as well as the scrapping of the benefit cap as crucial measures to protect people from food insecurity. Reversing key UK Government welfare reforms that have occurred since 2015 would lift an [estimated 70,000 people out of poverty in Scotland](#), including 30,000 children, in 2023-24.

The following diagram summarises the wide range of preventative actions the Scottish Government is taking that will help us realise our long-term ambition of ending the need for food banks by improving incomes and reducing costs.





Conclusion

This Plan sets out nine actions that we will take forward over the next three years to improve the response to household financial crisis. While we cannot know for certain what the economic situation will be in three years time, we expect that delivering this Plan will provide a body of evidence for how to deliver cash-first interventions effectively. It will put us in a strong position to engage further with others on how to scale up and spread this work, moving us closer toward our longer term ambition of a Scotland without the need for food banks. To support this, we will monitor and assess the impact of these actions over the three years of this Plan.

Collaboration will be key to the success of each and every action, and we will continue to listen directly to the people most affected by food insecurity and work closely with the services and organisations that support them. Tackling poverty, and the systemic inequalities that underpin it, requires urgent action and ownership from all partners across Scotland – government alone cannot make the change required. The objectives set out in this Plan are ones that anyone involved in responses to financial hardship can work toward – together, we must make the most of every opportunity to improve the response to crisis and prevent it from happening again.

The next three years will not be easy, but the core human rights principles set out in this Plan will help us all to respond to the unprecedented cost of living crisis. A Scotland without the need for food banks is possible – it is central to our Good Food Nation ambition, and we will continue to work towards this to the fullest of our power and resource.



Definitions



Food insecurity

The full range of experiences from worry regarding ability to afford food, through to compromising on quality and quantity of food and experiencing hunger. We recognise the social role of food and importance of being able to access food in ways which are common to a society.¹

Food bank

Charitable or community organisations that distribute food parcels to people experiencing financial hardship. The two largest food bank networks in Scotland are the Trussell Trust and the Independent Food Aid Network. These networks represent many but not all food banks. Many community food and other organisations also integrate food provision alongside their wider activities.

Cash-first

Ready access to emergency income when someone has no money for food. To prevent future hardship this should be delivered alongside welfare rights and income maximisation advice and support.



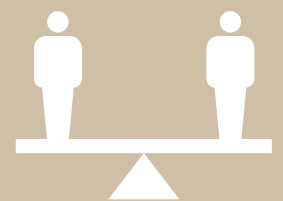
Holistic support services

A joined-up approach to delivering services across sectors that is centred around wellbeing through meeting the whole needs of an individual or household. This includes services that meet financial, health, social, and cultural needs.



Human rights approach

An approach to policy development and delivery that considers how to protect, respect, and fulfil the internationally recognised basic rights and freedoms which all human beings are entitled to.



¹. For more on how food insecurity is defined and measured, see: [Hunger | FAO | Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations](#)



© 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 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: 978-1-80525-895-7 (web only)

Published by The Scottish Government, May 2023

Produced for The Scottish Government by APS Group Scotland, 21 Tennant Street, Edinburgh EH6 5NA
PPDAS1128002 (05/23)

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