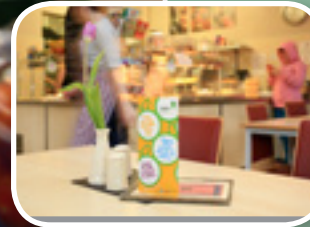


Food plus in practice



community
food and health
(scotland)



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Introduction

In response to growing food poverty and food insecurity in their communities, an increasing number of community food initiatives are involved in emergency food aid provision. Many of these provide 'more than food'. They offer a range of services that aim to help people to move out of, and thereby stay out of, food poverty, and distribute food aid directly to individuals affected by food poverty or through organisations working with them. This publication includes the work of eight of these community food initiatives, gathered from interviews carried out between October and December 2014.

The community food initiatives were asked about the services they had set up, why they had established them and about key points or issues they have identified through their emergency food aid work.

Setting the scene

Community Food and Health (Scotland), or CFHS, part of NHS Health Scotland,¹ was established in 1996 to support and develop community-led or community-run food and health activities. Increasing access to and availability of affordable, healthy food underpins its work.

More recently CFHS has been involved in the following pieces of work, in response to the growing number of people in Scotland directly affected by food poverty and food insecurity:

- a roundtable discussion,² held in July 2012, which considered constructive food and health policy and practice in the face of austerity.
- a national learning exchange held in February 2104. The consensus of those taking part was that local responses to food poverty had to be informed, joined up and not diverting communities from existing activity such as food co-ops, weaning groups and lunch clubs.³
- a group of community food practitioners meeting regularly to develop an understanding of human rights approaches to food poverty and what this may mean for community-based practice.⁴
- research into the nature and extent of food poverty (to be completed May 2015).⁵

Several pieces of research on food poverty and food insecurity in the UK or Scotland have been published in the last two years, by the UK Department of Work and Pensions⁶ and Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty,^{7,8} among others. These have highlighted the increase in food poverty and the related growth of emergency food aid provision (especially food banks). Some of the research acknowledges that emergency food aid on its own will not

result in a sustainable reduction in food poverty. Collectively, the research suggests that two actions (among others) are required to achieve this:

1. Eliminating the necessity for food banks through addressing the causes of food poverty.
2. Adopting a holistic approach to emergency food aid, including making a range of services available to the food aid recipients.

However, what all of the research recognises is the vital support that emergency food aid providers are delivering, echoed in a report published in June 2014 by the Welfare Reform Committee of the Scottish Parliament on food banks and welfare reform.⁹ This report also reinforces suggestions in some of the research about the importance of ensuring that food bank provision does not become an established part of the welfare system.

The Poverty Alliance carried out research for the Scottish Government, to be published in early 2015, about the provision of emergency food aid in Scotland.¹⁰ The research report contains a number of recommendations, including that emergency food aid recipients should have access to mainstream sources of support and access to affordable nutritious food is part of a preventative approach to food poverty.

Feeding Britain,¹¹ the report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom (published in December 2014), recommends the development of the 'food bank plus' model, co-locating emergency food aid with other services to meet the immediate need of people affected by food poverty and assist them to address the root causes. Although it includes a couple of recent examples, it does not acknowledge that similar work has been carried out for some time by community food initiatives across the UK.

Scottish policy responses to food poverty

Two sources of funding which support the development of 'food plus' models of emergency food provision have been available since 2013: the Big Lottery Fund's Support and Connect programme and the Scottish Government's Emergency Food Aid Action Plan.

Support and Connect funding

Support and Connect¹² is a £10 million programme, part of the Big Lottery Fund's Investing in Communities portfolio. It aims to improve the support available locally for people experiencing hardship and material need. The programme supports a range of projects that are focusing on the following activities:

- welfare advice
- financial skills training and services
- action to address food poverty
- provision of clothing and household goods
- action to address fuel poverty.

Activities are funded until spring/summer 2015. Four of the community food initiatives in this publication were awarded funding through the programme. The activities of another are supported indirectly.

Emergency Food Aid Action Plan

In response to increasing food poverty, the Scottish Government launched its Emergency Food Aid Action Plan in spring 2014. The two-year plan includes £1 million investment in food aid. £500,000 is being invested in the development of FareShare Scotland,¹³ and one community food initiative has benefitted from this funding.

The second investment is through the Emergency Food Fund, which is supporting projects responding to immediate demands for emergency food aid and helping to address the underlying causes of food poverty. £518,000 has been awarded to 26 projects across Scotland, including three community food initiatives included in this publication.¹⁴ Another is supported indirectly.

About the organisations

Edinburgh Community Food (ECF) aims to help people enjoy delicious, fresh healthy food and make sure everyone in the city has access to a healthy diet. It tackles health inequalities in low-income communities in Edinburgh through food and health development and promotion work including cooking courses, cookery demonstrations, nutrition workshops, health information sessions and tasting sessions.

ECF was awarded Support and Connect funding to develop the Healthy Food Bank, which was launched in November 2014 and will run until July 2015. The programme has three strands: providing emergency food aid; a voucher scheme; and further support (e.g. access to cooking classes or nutrition support). ECF has funding to provide 15 food parcels each week in one of three sizes: for individuals, couples or families. Each parcel contains enough food for up to three meals a day for five days.

www.edinburghcommunityfood.org.uk

Glasgow Central and West Integration Network (CWIN) supports integration of asylum seekers, refugees and migrant workers, as well as the settled Black and Minority Ethnic population in Glasgow. The network also seeks to work with both voluntary and statutory organisations that support the above communities by working in partnership and building their capacity. CWIN runs a range of services and activities.

CWIN has run a food bank for asylum seekers once a week since December 2012, providing around 40 food parcels a week. The network was awarded funding from the Emergency Food Fund to continue to run the food bank, to develop 'cooking on a budget'

classes and produce recipe cards. It hopes to provide 40 cookery sessions and produce recipe cards for 100 people by March 2016. The food bank is open to anyone in the area requiring it. In addition to tinned and dried goods, the food parcels provided contain fruit and vegetables, as well as bakery and dairy products when these can be sourced.

www.centralandwestintegration.org.uk

Granton Community Gardeners (GCG) is a community-led group operating in north Edinburgh. Set up in 2010, the group has developed community gardens in four sites in the area and hopes to develop more. It is generating economic, environmental and social outcomes and opportunities for the people involved and the wider area. Providing activities that involve more local people is one of the group's aims. It has set up the Gardeners Café, which provides meals made from produce grown by the group's members or from donated food. The café runs twice a week in a local community centre.

www.facebook.com/grantoncommunitygardeners

Community Food Initiatives North East (CFINE) operates in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire. Its aim is to improve health and wellbeing, contribute to regeneration, increase employability and create employment in and with disadvantaged communities by increasing access to affordable fruit and vegetables and other healthier foods, and encouraging and supporting volunteering. CFINE runs or supports over 80 community food outlets in the two areas.

CFINE is the lead partner in Food Bank Partnership Aberdeen, funded by Aberdeen City Council. It also runs FareShare Grampian, which received some Scottish Government funding through the Emergency Food Aid Action Plan. As well as supporting other food banks through the Partnership, CFINE runs one from its premises, which is used by up to 130 people each week.

www.cfine.org

Lanarkshire Community Food and Health Partnership (LCFHP) has been working throughout North Lanarkshire for over twenty years. It aims to tackle health inequalities related to food access and healthy eating, and support local communities to improve their health through better diet. It delivers a range of community food activities, including cookery and nutrition sessions, and runs and supplies over 40 community food co-ops.

LCFHP runs North Lanarkshire Food Aid (NLFA), an emergency food aid programme that includes five elements: referrals; food parcel collection or delivery; vouchers which can be used to buy produce from the food co-ops and stalls run or supported by LCFHP; an information pack for food parcel recipients; and cookery and nutrition classes (promoted as Food Link). It makes up food parcels that are delivered to programme partners' sites for collection or to food parcel clients' homes. NLFA was originally funded through Support and Connect; it is now funded through the Emergency Food Fund. In the first year it distributed 2400 food parcels.

www.lcfhp.co.uk

Orbiston Neighbourhood Centre (ONC) is a community-based organisation operating for the benefit of people living in the Orbiston and Bellshill area of North Lanarkshire. The centre's vision

is of a thriving, inclusive community where people can live, work and play in harmony. It opened in 1995 as a base for services and initiatives seeking to address problems of social exclusion and deprivation in the Bellshill community. The organisation is committed to improving equality, openness, care, accountability and access. ONC runs a shop, Theo's Store, and café, Theo's Café, both open five days a week. It operates a food bank from the shop.

The centre is a partner in NLFA and works closely with LCFHP, which provides the food parcels for the food bank.

oncbellshill.org

Community Food Moray (CFM) is a charity and social enterprise supporting healthy eating through access to affordable fruit, local vegetables and wholegrains in Moray. CFM aims to improve healthy eating choices and contribute to community wellbeing. Its ethos is to focus on using local produce where possible, to reduce food miles and food waste. It runs community food outlets across the area.

The charity set up a food bank in autumn 2013, currently the only food bank in Moray. CFM does not work with individual referrals but delivers food parcels to twenty organisations across Moray for distribution. It delivers around 35 parcels a week; the most delivered in one week was 56. The food bank was originally funded through the Support and Connect programme. CFM was awarded further funding through the Emergency Food Fund to continue and develop the service; this will be used to provide advice on a range of topics including budgeting, shopping and cooking, and debt and money advice, producing a pack which includes recipes and running a voucher scheme.

www.communityfoodmoray.co.uk

Community Links (CL) is a community development, consultation and engagement organisation based in South Lanarkshire. It runs several other services, including a Food Poverty Project which will provide a route out of food crisis through service provision and coordination with current food activities across South Lanarkshire.

The Food Poverty Project aims are to set up eight volunteer-led food co-ops, enhance the work of two food banks (it now works with six) through voucher and loyalty card schemes, and enhance the work of six breakfast clubs. It is being funded through the Support and Connect programme and the Emergency Food Fund until June 2015.

www.communitylinkssl.co.uk

Common themes

Identified need

When asked why they had started their emergency food aid services, all the organisations had done so in response to an identified need.

While there were a number of food banks operating in North Lanarkshire, LCFHP wanted to start NLFA because it saw a gap in existing provision. Some people in need of food aid were unable to access it, either because no food bank ran in the area or people were not physically able to get to one. Working with partners to increase the number of food aid outlets and setting up a home delivery service is helping to reduce this gap.

'...we see local food banks as the first port of call, with our programme acting as a safety net.'

ECF identified a need for emergency food aid that includes a wider range of food products than is usually included in food parcels and provides the ingredients for nutritionally balanced meals. ECF's food parcels contain fruit and vegetables, milk, eggs, bread, pulses, dried fruit and nuts, in addition to tinned and dried food. The products are also lower in salt and fat.

CFM had been running an emergency food box scheme since August 2011. This was set up to support people who found themselves in need of help because of homelessness, delays in accessing benefits or other unforeseen circumstances. Initially the need was assessed as four boxes of fresh produce a month. By April 2013, CFM was receiving referrals for 40 boxes a month. To meet this demand it made the decision to set up a food bank, providing food boxes that contain non-perishable items and bread in addition to fruit and vegetables.

'...our aim is to keep (the food parcel recipient) as healthy as possible while they are going through a very vulnerable time.'

ONC had identified a local need for food aid, was considering setting up a food bank and had contacted the Trussell Trust.¹⁵ However, it decided it would prefer to be part of NLFA, partly to be involved in a North Lanarkshire-wide programme rather than something focused on a very local area, and partly because of the other services available through the programme.

Another community food initiative sees its emergency food aid as 'a way of extending the work we already deliver in low income communities, of promoting our work more widely, and of reaching more people.'

Working in partnership

Six of the eight community food initiatives provide food parcels. Three of these do so through the food banks they have set up. Four provide food parcels or food for parcels to other organisations for distribution; one of these has also set up a food bank at their premises and another provides a home delivery service. Most rely on food contributions from partners.

Partnership working is key for all the community food initiatives. None of the them would be able to deliver their services otherwise.

FareShare

Five of the community food initiatives have links with FareShare at national or local levels. One operates a FareShare operation, another is a local hub for a FareShare operation and the others are members of a FareShare.

As part of its response to food poverty in the area, North Lanarkshire Council has paid the membership costs for seven organisations to join Glasgow FareShare. LCFHP acts as the local spoke, delivering produce to the other groups that are working with NLFA. The groups use the food obtained through FareShare in their cafés, community meals, soup kitchens and food banks. Some of the food is also included in the food parcels made up by LCFHP.

CFINE manages FareShare Grampian (previously FareShare Aberdeen, established in 2006). Through FareShare UK it receives up to 10 pallets of surplus food a week which is delivered to projects, including those that are members of the Food Bank Partnership.

Relationship with local businesses

Three of the community food initiatives receive donations of food as a result of having built relationships with local businesses. One works in partnership with a major food retailer.

Donations for CFM's food parcels are very generous and are received from a large range of donors including local farms, supermarkets and community members.

CWIN works with a number of partners. It receives food from Glasgow FareShare and donations from a cash and carry and a supermarket. The donations include fruit and vegetables, and dairy and bakery products.

LCFHP purchases some of the food products included in its food parcels at cost from Scotmid.¹⁶

Operation

Capacity

All of the community food initiatives required additional capacity to set up their emergency food aid services, with all receiving funding or support to do so. Some of the community food initiatives, particularly the larger ones, had the infrastructure in place, e.g. staffing, warehouses, transport, which made it easier to establish an additional service.

Using a referral system

All six initiatives providing food parcels operate a referral system, with referrals made by a range of organisations including (but not exclusively) social work teams, housing agencies, Citizens Advice Bureaux and other welfare rights organisations, health services and schools. Two will also provide food parcels to people who self-refer, and another will make up parcels from food in stock if people arrive without a referral and are in need.

People may turn up at ONC looking for food aid without a referral. It makes up food parcels from the shop's stock and refers the person receiving the parcel to a Citizens Advice Bureau.

LCFHP's information pack for food aid recipients includes details of agencies that can provide welfare or benefit advice and support. Everyone referred to NLFA receives the information pack.

Advice services

Five of the community food initiatives work closely with welfare rights organisations, taking referrals from these but also referring or signposting people to them if necessary to ensure they receive appropriate advice.

Two of the community food initiatives have welfare rights or benefits advice staff on site when their emergency food aid services are running.

One, ECF, has chosen to restrict its activities and focus on its strengths, skills and expertise around food and health. It recognises that partner agencies making referrals to its services are better placed to provide advice or signpost to other issues.

Other food and health activities

Five of the community food initiatives are funded to run cookery or nutrition sessions as part of their emergency food aid services. Two were planning to start these in early 2015. Three are working, or intend to work, with partners to deliver the sessions.

Working with food co-ops and stalls

As part of their emergency food aid programmes, five of the community food initiatives run a voucher scheme for people receiving food parcels. All five hope that once people receiving the vouchers have made links with the food co-ops and stalls running in their areas they will continue to buy from these.

Everyone receiving a food parcel from ECF will also receive four vouchers that can be used to buy produce from the food co-ops and fruit and vegetable stalls it runs or supports (including hospital fruit and vegetable stalls), its warehouse or partner outlets. The vouchers are worth £2.50 or £5, depending on whether the recipient is an individual, a couple or a family. A further four vouchers may be issued.

LCFHP runs a similar scheme, providing two vouchers worth £4 or £10. Again, these must be used at one of LCFHP's co-ops or hospital stalls or at a NLFA partner's co-op. Originally, food parcel recipients received four vouchers, but this proved too costly to continue. Recipients have 6 months to use the vouchers. Most (around 55%) are used, but not all.

People can use the vouchers in ONC to buy food from the centre's café or from the shop. Most are used in the shop, but some people, particularly younger single men, do use these in the café.

Community Food Moray provides vouchers for a 20% discount on produce sold at the community food outlets it supports.

Community Links has issued 2400 vouchers, each worth £5, to the food bank it works with, each receiving 400. They can be used to buy fruit and vegetables and other products, such as bread and eggs. CL advises the food banks about how the vouchers could be distributed, but each food bank is free to do this how they want, depending on the needs

of the people who will be receiving them. The food banks are asked to collect the postcodes of recipients so that the project can identify which areas are making most use of the food co-ops. CL is also running a loyalty card scheme: co-op customers receive a £1 discount when they have shopped there four times. 250 loyalty cards have been redeemed so far.

Parcel collection

Food parcel recipients are usually expected to collect the parcels from the designated sites. However, two of the community food initiatives running food banks will deliver parcels if people are unable to collect these, or will help people receiving food parcels with transport or travel costs if needed.

Because Theo's Store, the ONC's shop, is open 5 days a week, it provides more food parcels than the other NLFA partners. People receiving the parcels may live some distance away; if they are unable to carry the parcel (the family parcel contains three carrier bags which include tinned goods), and cannot afford transport fares, ONC may help with this.

Issues

Demand for services

Three of the community food initiatives that have been running their emergency food aid for some time highlighted the level of demand and the implication for their services.

LCFHP's funding through Support and Connect was intended to provide 1500 food parcels by March 2015. Demand for the service has been much higher, with 2400 parcels provided between November 2013 and November 2014. Through reallocation of budgets and internal cost savings, LCFHP is able to continue to supply parcels until January 2015. Following an award from the Emergency Food Fund, it will be able to continue to deliver its services until March 2016.

The demand for LCFHP's cookery and nutrition sessions, available through NLFA, has also been much higher than expected. Originally it anticipated that 500 people would benefit, but this number has been greatly exceeded.

The level of donations for CWIN from FareShare has declined because of an increase in membership. In order to meet the demand for food parcels, CWIN is looking for more food suppliers.

Another highlighted a 'massive' increase in demand in the previous few weeks, and anticipated that this would increase over the winter, including from people in work but on low wages.

Several recognised that food poverty or food insecurity was only one of the challenges faced by many of the people using their services. Wider poverty issues, such as low wages, fuel poverty and lack of cooking equipment, were highlighted. ECF asks all referring agencies to find out what cooking appliance their clients have to identify if this is an issue. CFM supplies 'cold boxes' for people who have no cooking equipment.

Stigma

Several community food initiatives spoke about the stigma associated with using food banks and how they were working to overcome this. The need to build relationships with people using the food banks was highlighted by four of them.

Rather than work with individual referrals from organisations, CFM delivers food parcels for these to distribute; it recognises that pride may stop people from seeking assistance if a referral system was used.

Building and maintaining contact with clients will be an essential part of ECF's emergency food aid services. It will contact everyone who receives a food parcel to see if they require further support, such as cooking classes, nutrition support, recipes or additional vouchers (they may receive another four). This follow-up contact will also be used to identify other food and health needs. Information about the additional support available will be included on ECF's website

and Facebook page (including budget recipes, hints about eating seasonally and the opening times of the food co-ops and stalls). ECF is very aware that some of the food parcel recipients may not be able to access these digitally.

Everyone using CFINE's food bank speaks to a member of staff to find out how else they can be supported. It aims to link people using the food bank to other services, but recognises that a level of trust needs to be established first.

However, this can be difficult to achieve.

ONC finds that it has less interaction with people collecting food parcels than expected, despite trying to ensure that everyone doing so is made to feel welcome and valued.

Reach

Two community food initiatives recognised that older people are less likely to use their emergency food aid services. They were working with other agencies in order to change this.

One also recognised that families were less likely to attend the food activities they were running. It has refocused and changed its approach, and is now running other activities which it hopes will attract people who have not taken part before.

Ensuring clients benefit from referral

One community food initiative was concerned that working with a wide range of referral agencies may not always be in the best interests of the people being referred:

'In retrospect, we believe that all referrals (to our service) should be made through the Scottish Welfare Fund¹⁷ or Citizens Advice Bureau to ensure that people receive the support they require to maximise their incomes and move them out of poverty.'

Changing perceptions about food poverty

Two of the community food initiatives had encountered and challenged some common views about food poverty held by their volunteers.

To ensure those receiving food parcels are treated with dignity and respect, ONC worked with the volunteers in the Store and the Café to overcome any negative perceptions about food poverty.

Dependency

While aiming to reduce dependency on food aid, most of the community food initiatives do not limit the number of food parcels someone can receive. However, ECF is only providing one food parcel per referral.

Positives

Contribution of food bank users

Valuing the positive contribution that people using food banks can make to their emergency food services was highlighted by two of the community food initiatives. For example, both have volunteers working with them who are, or have been, food bank clients.

Contribution of volunteers

Several community food initiatives stated that volunteers keep their emergency food services running. As well as making up and distributing food parcels, volunteers are involved in a range of tasks (e.g. transporting food parcels, carrying out admin work).

CL knows that the sustainability of the food co-ops established depends on recruiting volunteers. It has been easier to find volunteers to set up and run some of the co-ops than others. While some of the co-ops are working towards operating independently, CL is running others at the moment, but is actively seeking to recruit volunteers.

Reducing isolation

Four of the community food initiatives emphasised the importance of their services in reducing social isolation.

The Gardeners Café, set up in May 2014, is seen as a natural progression to the group's other work. The café prepares and serves meals two evenings a week in a local community centre. The meals are prepared using as much produce as possible from the four gardens, foodstuffs provided from Edinburgh Fareshare and from donated foods. There is no charge: people eating at the café are asked to make a contribution, which may be donating money towards the cost of the meal, helping to prepare and serve the food or cleaning up. People taking part in the meals are invited to contribute however they can. The café's aims are to enable people to eat together and to develop a culture where everyone is able to contribute something. While not specifically run for people who are affected by food poverty, many of the customers are; the café offers an alternative approach to tackling the issue. Around 30 people eat in the cafe on both evenings.

The social aspect of CWIN's food bank is vitally important, especially for some of the clients who use it regularly. Some, particularly asylum seekers, have very little opportunity to meet other people. Everyone using the food bank is invited to stay for a bowl of soup (made by volunteers) and a chat. The Citizens Advice Bureau visits the food bank once a fortnight at the same time, providing information and signposting in this informal setting.

Sharing and learning from each other

The importance and value of providing space for people to share their experiences and learn from each other was identified by one organisation. It runs a breakfast service targeted at families in the area. This includes informal sessions around topics such as budgeting and debt management. People using the service are encouraged to share their hints and tips for making money go further.

The aims of the sessions are to provide information about, and access to, a range of services around health and wellbeing, build people's confidence and knowledge, and encourage people to take part in other food and health activities, such as cooking classes. The breakfast service is also used to gather views about other services that people want.

Future plans for the services

All of the community food initiatives expected demand for their emergency food aid services to continue beyond the end of their funding. Some stated that they would look for other sources of funding to continue their services when the current funding ceases. Some had begun planning how they would like to continue the services post funding.

The need to gather evidence to demonstrate the impact of its work to other funders was highlighted by one community food initiative. Another stated that it wants to 'get back to basics' because of the short-term nature of the funding, and work with the local community to identify the food activities people want. It recognises that access to affordable food is the longer-term solution to addressing food poverty.

Some of the services had been running for a short time; others had only just begun. Although those running for longer were gathering quantitative information about their services (e.g. number of people supported, number of food parcels delivered, number of partner agencies worked with) none appeared to be in a position yet to gather information about the impact of the services.

Learning points

The feedback from the eight community food initiatives suggests the following key points should be considered by organisations wanting to set up a 'food plus' emergency food aid service.

- What services are needed? What are the gaps in existing services?
- Who will be our partners? Who do we need to work with? Who can help us deliver our service?
- What capacity do we have, and need, to set up and run the service?
- Who is our target audience? Who will the service be for? How will we reach them?
- How can we ensure our service is open and welcoming?
- How can we measure the impact of our service?

Notes

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12. The Big Lottery Fund. www.biglotteryfund.org.uk/supportandconnect
13. FareShare is a UK charity working with over 100 food companies, including manufacturers and retailers. It takes edible food that would otherwise be wasted or diverted to non-human consumption and feeds it to people in need. It has 20 regional centres across the UK where the surplus food is stored and redistributed. FareShare Scotland is part of FareShare UK. www.fareshare.org.uk
14. www.scotland.gov.uk

15. The Trussell Trust is a charity that works with churches and communities to address food poverty through setting up foodbanks. www.trusselltrust.org
16. Scotmid is a cooperative society which has 190 convenience stores across Scotland.
17. The Scottish Welfare Fund replaces Crisis Loans and Community Care Grants and is administered by local authorities.



www.communityfoodandhealth.org.uk