



Everyone Home Collective: 

Response to the Scottish Government's draft national plan for ending the need for food banks

January 2022

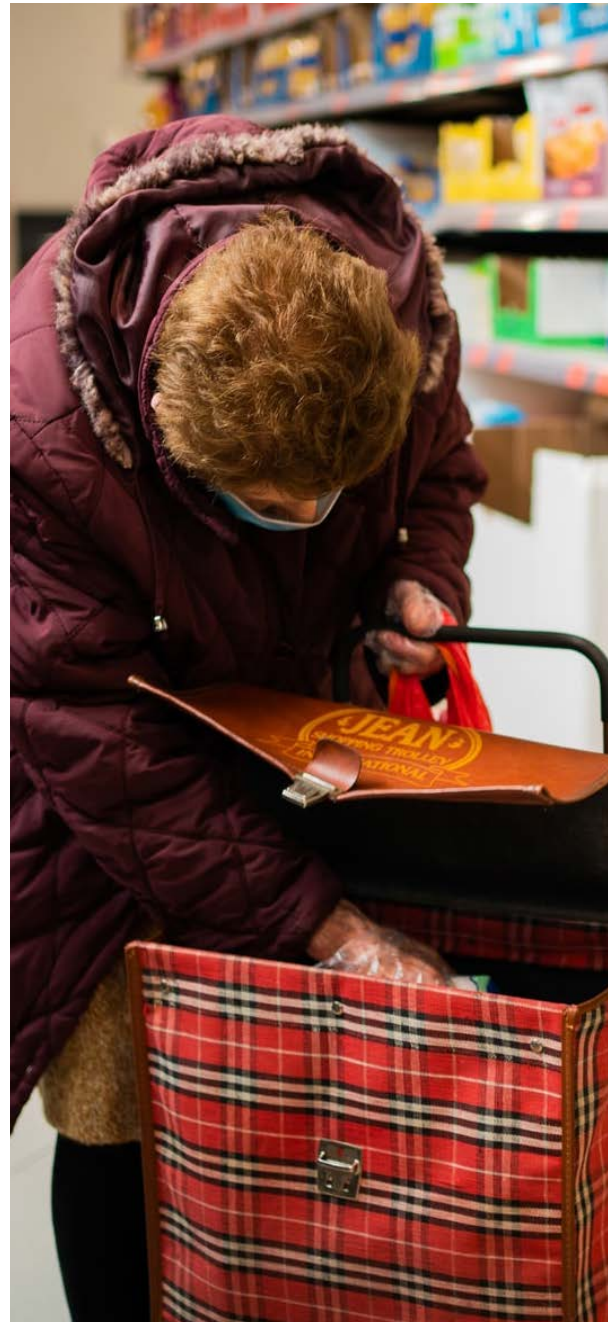
Our interest

Everyone Home is a collective of 36 third and academic organisations who came together in 2020 to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on the scale and experience of homelessness in Scotland. We span frontline services, accommodation, legal services and include intermediary, knowledge-based and campaigning organisations.

Ending hunger and food insecurity must be a priority in Scotland in 2022 and recognised as a symptom requiring broader structural reform, social renewal and poverty reduction. Our thanks to the Scottish Government's Tackling Food Insecurity Team for this well written, researched and aligned draft plan for ending the need for food banks as a primary response to food insecurity. Our interest in the draft plan is threefold:

- Poverty is the primary driver for homelessness in all its forms, with child poverty a powerful predictor of adult homelessness.
- The homelessness third sector in Scotland has a very long history of food provision using many approaches and has valuable learning and experience to share.
- We are inspired by the leadership of the foodbank networks to co-design a plan to bring about an end to their own delivery in its current form, which resonates with recent and future aspects of homelessness service provision.

Overall, we want the Scottish Government to ensure that the plan to end the need for foodbanks umbrellas initiatives intended for people affected by homelessness and destitution in Scotland. It is vital that homelessness services are not siloed so that we can aspire to a universal set of standards, regardless of the housing situation that people experiencing food insecurity are in.





Our scope

The homelessness third sector has a long history of charitable food provision using many approaches. This includes:

- Provision of hot meals and prepared food in community and communal settings at low or no cost.
- Food preparation and sharing mealtimes within temporary and supported accommodation.
- Food preparation and budgeting skills courses.
- Community pantries, low-cost access to cupboard items, chilled and fresh produce.
- Take-away food parcels and items at low or no cost.
- Operators of Fare Share Scotland, surplus food redistribution.
- Enabling out-of-hours and rapid access to food for households in transition - for example, people leaving prison or entering temporary or emergency accommodation.

Historically the use of outdoor 'soup-kitchen' style initiatives have been associated with the homelessness sector in key cities, which were gradually modernised and taken off the street to maximise dignity and safety (although more recently there has been some re-emergence of this type of volunteer-led service).



maximise dignity and reduce future demand

Scottish Government



In support of the draft national plan

We agree that:

- Insufficient and insecure incomes drive household food insecurity which results in people having to compromise on food and other essentials.
- Food banks are not an appropriate or long-term response to poverty, where we recognise that opportunities to strengthen income and prevent future hardship are often missed.
- Food parcels are rarely able to meet dietary, social and cultural needs and preferences.
- Food insecurity has considerable physical, psychological and social impacts on individuals and families¹.

And support the alternative position as set out in the draft plan that:

- Responses to poverty should be ‘cash-first’ – enabling rapid access to financial assistance and money advice alongside access to holistic support services.
- Where help to access food is needed, this is provided in a way that maximises dignity, choice and reduces future need.

To further the draft national plan

We offer additional considerations to further the ambition of the draft national plan to end the need for foodbanks in Scotland, and to ensure that the objectives proactively umbrella food initiatives intended for people affected by homelessness and destitution.

We need clear policy alignment with the joint Scottish Government and COSLA [National Plan to End Homelessness](#) and the [National Plan to End Destitution](#). While we recognise many overlapping policies, homelessness policy is central due to the high prevalence of food parcels and prepared food provision within the homelessness sector.

This learning from our sector means we recognise aspects of charitable food-giving that are positive, and some that have the potential to do harm. It is a careful balance that has been carefully honed in the homelessness sector over many decades.

Where help to access food is needed, we highlight the following measures that can help to ensure that the Scottish Government’s stated objective to ‘*maximise dignity and reduce future demand*’ is met:

¹ <https://amenuforchange.wordpress.com>

1. Place-based assistance

Help to access food and end food insecurity should be factored into the design of the 20-minute neighbourhood policy in Scotland. Local communities are able to determine whether this type of service is needed in their area and can coproduce its development and monitor its impact.

- The one-directional nature of food charity can create difference, distance from society and sometimes shame. The Everyone Home Collective advocates mutual aid, ensuring everyone can practice reciprocity and solidarity.
- The Everyone Home collective strongly advocates that neighbourhood food assistance draws from the 'community pantry' approach, with a reciprocal 'drop off or pick up' approach that is also sensitive to the reality that food insecurity for some households is sporadic rather than permanent.
- The community pantry approach maximises choice and control and can also create an empowering environment with training and volunteering opportunities, for example, along with options for prepared and shared food.
- The important principle of increasing access to food while reducing food waste. In addition to community pantry and FareShare organised initiatives, raising awareness of other local sources, including food 'instore' offers and initiatives.



2. Prepared and shared

The positive benefits of prepared and shared food for people who also seek a social interaction or stronger social network are clear and demonstrated. These benefits can be enhanced as follows:

- Where there is proven demand, services should be delivered indoors, enabling comfort, privacy and dignity and with protection from weather. Support from local councils should be provided to ensure that a suitable and accessible indoor venue is used, and appropriate safety and food hygiene accreditations are in place.
- Proactive connections to holistic services, and access to financial assistance including emergency supermarket vouchers should be enabled to reduce future demand.
- The nature of support provided can make a significant difference to a person's outcomes. It is important that the position, experience, and interests of the recipients are centred and recognised².

'Community Meals' is an approach that provides direct access to prepared food for everyone who wants to attend. It enables both access to good food with dignity and the opportunity to become part of a community, build new relationships and access new services.

² Charity and Poverty in Advanced Welfare States (Cameron Parsell, Andrew Clarke, Francisco Perales; 2021)





About The Collective

Everyone Home is a collective of 36 third and academic sector organisations that have come together during the COVID-19 pandemic to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on homelessness in Scotland. Read our framework at www.everyonehome.scot and join us on social media at #EveryoneHome

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