

Glasgow Cash-First Project 2024-2026

A summary

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Supported by The Fair Food for All Partnership



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Executive summary

The Glasgow Cash-First Project was one of eight Scottish Government pilots aiming to reduce reliance on food banks by prioritising income maximisation and advice-based support. Delivered between December 2023 and January 2026, the project took a systems approach, focussing on partnership working, improving access to existing services, and strengthening workforce capability rather than creating new services.

To maximise impact, the project focussed on strengthening the existing systems with coordination and leadership from the Fair Food for All Partnership, promoting Glasgow Helps as the main referral pathway, and delivering training and workforce development to improve awareness of services.

The project highlighted that food insecurity reflects both affordability and access challenges, community food provision operates as a complementary system of food banks, pantries, and social supermarkets – each with a vital role in meeting the high levels of food insecurity across the city. Cash-first approaches are an important part of the response to food insecurity, improving dignity and choice for people who are in crisis.

The project has strengthened partnership working and system coordination, improved awareness and use of existing services, increased confidence and consistency among frontline staff, strengthened links between crisis support and advice services. A small test of change showed that cash-equivalent vouchers increased choice and dignity, reduced food bank use for some, and encouraged engagement with wider support.

The project demonstrates that system-wide improvement is achievable, even in a challenging context. However, cash-first approaches cannot reduce food insecurity on their own; low income is the key driver of food insecurity, so lasting change requires adequate incomes, coordinated systems, and accessible, dignity-based support.



Introduction

Glasgow's Cash-First Project was one of eight partnership pilots supported by the Scottish Government to deliver the first ambition set out in the [Cash-First: Towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland Plan](#) to 'support new local partnership work to deliver cash-first'. In its Plan, the Scottish Government defines 'cash-first' as ready access to emergency income when someone has no money for food but also recognise that the term can include a range of cash and in-kind support to help people build financial resilience and limit their reliance on food banks. Each partnership received up to £200,000 over a two-year period, alongside national learning and evaluation support. In Glasgow, the Cash-First Project was led by the Glasgow Fair Food for All Partnership.

Given the scale of poverty and food insecurity in Glasgow, partners recognised that providing direct cash support alone, while beneficial to individuals, would have limited and short-term impact at a city level. Instead, the Partnership adopted a systems approach, aligned with the [Glasgow City Food Plan](#), focussing on strengthening collaboration, improving coordination, and building capacity across the city. The [Glasgow Centre for Population Health](#) (GCPH), which oversees delivery of the Glasgow City Food Plan, hosted and supported the project, and provided support to the Glasgow Fair Food for All Partnership. This report summarises the key activities, findings, and learning from the project. Definitions and acronyms used in this report are described in Appendix 1.

Context

Glasgow City is home to approximately 11% of Scotland's population. Around 29% of the city's population live in the most-deprived 10% of areas in Scotland, with almost 44% living in the most-deprived 20% of areas.

Glasgow City Council and NHSGGC [Adult Health and Wellbeing Survey data for 2022/2023](#) indicate that 19.3% of the population were income deprived, compared to a national average of 12.1%, ranging from 16.8% in North West Glasgow to 22.8% in North East Glasgow.

Glasgow has the most ethnically diverse population in Scotland, with 19% of the population from an ethnic minority¹. Glasgow also hosts the highest number of asylum seekers in Scotland, with nearly two thirds of all supported asylum seekers in Scotland, according to official statistics, although this is likely to underrepresent the true number.

Glasgow has one of the poorest health profiles in Scotland and the rest of the UK; in 2020-22, a boy born in Glasgow was estimated to live to 72.9 years, which is 3.6 years shorter than in Scotland as a whole. Female life expectancy is also lower than in other Scottish cities; in 2020-22, a girl born in Glasgow was estimated to live to 78.2 years, 2.5 years less than in Scotland as a whole. In 2022, 26% of Glasgow's population reported a long-term health problem or disability².

The gap in life expectancy between the most and least deprived deciles using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) has widened in the last two decades. For men, this gap is 16.4 years, and for women it is 11.6 years².

[NHS Adult Health and Wellbeing survey from 2022/23](#) reports that 44.4% of adults in Glasgow had difficulty meeting food and/or energy costs, rising to 52% for people living in Scotland's most-deprived areas. Using the [Food Insecurity Experience Scale](#) (FIES) the survey reports that 21.8% of adults had experienced food insecurity in the previous year, ranging from 29.6% of people living in the most-deprived areas to 17.4% of people living in all other areas. Compared to previous surveys, the proportion of people who reported experiencing food insecurity almost doubled from 9% in 2017/18 to 17% in 2022/23. Restrictions during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020/2021 increased levels of food insecurity due to difficulties in accessibility and affordability, but these survey responses indicate that the proportion of people in Glasgow experiencing food insecurity continued to increase after the pandemic, especially in areas of multiple deprivation where they have increased from 14.3% of respondents in 2018/19 to 26.9% in 2022/23.



Within Glasgow, slightly more than 25% of children live in poverty³. Glasgow City Council's Child Poverty Programme has multidisciplinary teams in the council which work in partnership with the Scottish Government, the third sector and the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) to tackle child poverty. As part of this work, the [Centre for Civic Innovation publishes annual reports](#) of child poverty in Glasgow and has used data being routinely collected by Glasgow City Council and the DWP to produce the [child poverty dashboard](#).

The [Glasgow City Food Plan](#) is a 10-year framework with the aim of achieving a food system in Glasgow that is *“fair, resilient and environmentally sustainable and enables everyone in Glasgow to eat healthy, affordable, culturally-appropriate, good food, irrespective of where they live, their income or personal circumstances.”* The Plan, developed by a multi-sector partnership with extensive engagement with stakeholders and launched in 2021, seeks to bring together partners from the community, public and private sectors to improve collaboration, coordination, and coherence to work to build a better Glasgow's food system. One of the long-term outcomes of the plan is *“improved access to healthy, affordable food and reduced food insecurity”*, supported by a multi-agency working group: the Fair Food for All Partnership.

Project aim

The aim of the Cash-First Project in Glasgow was to work collaboratively with key partners to develop sustainable pathways and practices that support a transition to cash and advice first, social retail, and preventative approaches to food insecurity.

Project objectives

The project supported the Glasgow City Food Plan's *Fair Food for All* theme, with objectives to:

- ➡ establish a multi-sector Fair Food for All Partnership
- ➡ improve understanding of cash and food support pathways
- ➡ support development of cash and advice first approaches and referral pathways
- ➡ strengthen integration with Glasgow Helps
- ➡ improve access to support for people at risk
- ➡ embed lived experience in service design

These objectives were refined as the project evolved in response to emerging learning and context.

Project activities and outputs

The project delivered a coordinated programme of activity between December 2023 and January 2026, which are described briefly below. A timeline is included in Appendix 1.

1. Establishment of the Fair Food for All Partnership

The Fair Food for All Partnership was established to bring together stakeholders across sectors. It provided leadership, coordination, and a shared space for collaboration and learning. It brought two pre-existing partnerships together: the Fair Food for All Subgroup of Glasgow Food Policy Partnership, established to address to food insecurity theme of the Glasgow City Food Plan, and the Glasgow Food Poverty Pathfinder Partnership, which had previously been established to identify strategic and practical steps to enable people affected by food insecurity to find their way to more appropriate help, with a view to reducing both the numbers of people seeking help from food banks and the length of time over which clients require to access food banks.

The purpose of the new partnership was to support the development and delivery of the Cash-First Project in Glasgow, within the context of other ongoing work, including the Glasgow City Food Plan and the Child Poverty Programme.

Once Glasgow had secured one of the Scottish Government-funded Cash-First projects, a project manager was appointed, hosted by the Glasgow Centre for Population Health.

2. Creation of the 'Cash-first approaches in Glasgow' webpage

Early in the project, it was evident that understanding of 'cash-first approaches' was inconsistent amongst stakeholders and partners. To help address this, a webpage '[Cash-first approaches in Glasgow](#)' was developed, with the Glasgow project's objectives alongside information on cash-first approaches.



The webpage was subsequently developed to include recordings and slides from webinars, and additional resources and reading gathered over the course of the two-year project, including [IFAN's Worrying about Money Leaflet for Glasgow](#) and [Glasgow Helps' leaflet](#). Towards the end of the project, a list of [Cash-First training and awareness raising resources](#) was compiled to be downloaded as a standalone resource. This was produced with support from GCPH's communications team, hosted on GCPH's website and updated at regular intervals.

3. Development of a concept explainer

Following on from the creation of the 'Cash-first approaches in Glasgow' webpage and to continue supporting a shared understanding of the cash-first approach, a [Cash-First concept explainer](#) was developed and published on the Glasgow project's webpage and shared on GCPH's social media platforms. GCPH produce a number of [concept explainers](#) to explain key concepts in public health in simple, easy to understand language. These aim to support a better understanding of the importance of public health for communities and society.



4. Delivery of training and awareness-raising sessions



Prior to the start of Glasgow's Cash-First Project, Glasgow Community Food Network (GCFN) had commissioned and published the [Cash-First in Community Food Settings Research Report: Insights from Glasgow](#), also funded by the Scottish Government. This identified a lack of shared understanding of the 'cash-first' term across the community food sector, and the need for training, workshops, and spaces for conversations to develop a better understanding of the term.



Based on recommendations from this report, the Glasgow Cash-First Project worked with GCFN to plan appropriate training and awareness-raising sessions to increase opportunities for community food organisations to learn more about the cash-first approach and how they might support it through their services.

A total of 18 training and awareness-raising sessions were organised as part of the Glasgow Cash-First Project, commissioned and delivered between October 2024 and January 2026. These sessions focussed on cash-first approaches and pathways to support, and were reported to improve confidence, consistency, and the use of dignity-based approaches across organisations. More information about these sessions can be found in Appendix 3.

5. Research commissioned from the Centre for Civic Innovation

Early in the project, it was clear that the data available to understand the levels of food insecurity across Glasgow are limited and heavily reliant on the [NHSGGC Health and Wellbeing Survey](#), which takes place every three years over six local authorities (of which Glasgow City represents one). It measures food insecurity using the eight questions from the [Food Insecurity Experience \(FIES\) Scale](#). Other food insecurity data available include those from the Scottish Health Survey, which since 2019, has used the [USDA measure of household food security](#) in line with the UK-wide DWP Family Resources Survey. The SHS is a national survey which includes fewer participants so is not representative at local area level.

While public and third-sector organisations across the city collect a range of data, they are not currently collated at a local authority level to inform service provision or decision making^a.

To help build a more detailed understanding of food insecurity in Glasgow, including the demographics and circumstances of those most affected, the [Centre for Civic Innovation](#) (CCI) was commissioned to take a multi-method approach involving data collation, analysis and engagement with services providing food support across the city. CCI used data from applications to the [Scottish Welfare Fund](#) (SWF) and calls to Glasgow Helps (GH) that related to food insecurity. More information on SWF and GH can be found in Appendix 1.

The total SWF applications from Glasgow represent 15.6% of applications across Scotland and Crisis Grant applications from Glasgow represent 16.2% of the total across Scotland. While only 11% of Scotland's population live in Glasgow, the

^a Note that whilst Glasgow City Council's Child Poverty Programme publishes annual reports of child poverty in Glasgow and produces a child poverty dashboard, this does not focus on wider food insecurity.



proportionately higher applications for SWF and Crisis Grants reflect the higher levels of deprivation in the city. These data exclude people who have no recourse to public funds (NRPF), as they are not eligible to access the SWF.

Applications to the Crisis Grant are usually awarded in cash, making them relevant to the cash-first approach to addressing food insecurity. The CCI research found that 96% (38,322) of Crisis Grant applications in Glasgow during the study period cited food insecurity as one of the reasons. The average Crisis Grant awarded in Glasgow was higher than the average for Scotland at £150.92 compared to £114, but since many factors are taken into account for these awards, it is not straightforward to identify the reason for this difference.

The proportion of SWF grants awarded to households with children in Glasgow (38%) is similar to the rest of Scotland (36%); accordingly, almost two thirds (62%) are from households without children. People aged between 25 and 44 years accounted for 66% of all the Crisis Grant applications linked to food insecurity and people with a stated disability made up 25% of these applications, however, only 44% of applicants provided this information. The three wards in Glasgow with the highest number of applications overall in the study period (April 24 to March 25) were Drumchapel/Anniesland, Canal and Anderston/City/Yorkhill.

Between January and December 2024, CCI research showed that there were 4,891 calls to Glasgow Helps related to food insecurity (for more information on Glasgow Helps see the glossary in Appendix 1). Of these, 28% from households with children and 72% from households without children. During the study period, a greater proportion of calls to Glasgow Helps for reasons related to food insecurity were from women (46%) than men (34%), with the remaining 20% preferring not to share their gender. The largest single group contacting Glasgow Helps with food-related concerns was women aged 35-44 (15% of the total).

Just over half the calls (53%) to Glasgow Helps related to food insecurity were due to access to food, with 46% of calls being due to the affordability of food and a minority 0.5% of callers said their main issue was culturally-appropriate food. This suggests that it is not only the cost of food that is a barrier, but that being able to access food provision is also a major issue. In line with the support and onward referrals Glasgow Helps provides as standard, 45% of callers were referred to food support from food banks, pantries etc. and 11% were referred for money or energy advice.

This research highlighted high levels of demand for crisis support relating to food insecurity across Glasgow, with significant demand from working-age households without children and a strong link between Crisis Grant applications and food insecurity. However, the research also highlights the limitations in the data available, including the low reporting of disability status.

6. Extended funding for Access to Advice service

The Access to Advice service was an early intervention and prevention offer funded by Trussell as part of their Pathways to Advice and Cash Scotland projects between July 2023 and June 2025, and delivered in collaboration with Glasgow Helps. Glasgow's Cash-First Project provided additional funding for this project. In the period between 1st January and 30th June 2025, 420 advice referrals were made by Glasgow Helps to the Access to Advice service, with most of these referrals being directed to Glasgow Northwest Citizens Advice Bureau for benefit or debt advice.

This aligns to Glasgow Helps data on the residence of people accessing support reported by CCI, with the highest numbers living in Maryhill, North Kelvinside and Ruchill – all areas in the North and Northwest of Glasgow. People were supported in line with their needs and were often accessing multiple services, with the most commonly accessed services including financial assistance, food, utilities, bills and housing. People using this service reported positive outcomes, including improvements in their mental health, increased confidence in financial matters, and improved social relationships.

The additional funding provided enabled faster access to financial support for individuals presenting for support, improving outcomes and a potentially reduced risk of repeat crises.

7. Lived-experience research jointly commissioned with GCFN



The Glasgow Cash-First Project collaborated with GCFN to co-commission engagement with people based in Glasgow who had previously accessed a variety of community food initiatives to explore how cash-first support could be implemented in these settings. The research took a co-design and asset-based, community development approach to design and facilitation, and resulted in the production of a zine with recommendations on how improvements can be made to community food initiatives. The zine is available [here](#). The key recommendations to improve access to cash-first supports are listed below.

- ➔ **Training for all staff and volunteers:** this should include why people experience poverty, cash-first approaches, the asylum-seeking process, the importance of dignity and choice and how to practice this, addressing stigma, active listening.
- ➔ **Creating a welcoming space:** ensure people feel welcome and included, provide a confidential space for people to feel comfortable talking about personal issues and concerns. A space that invites people to stay longer, with places to sit and relax, helps build trust.
- ➔ **Partnerships and collaborative working:** organisations working together to share best practice and increase awareness of support available.
- ➔ **Creating a culture of empathy, compassion and care:** taking the time to chat, being friendly and welcoming. People may have previously had negative experiences accessing support; this makes it even more important to build trusting relationships.
- ➔ **Involving the people accessing the community food initiative:** provide opportunities for feedback and decision making, provide skill sharing/learning opportunities.

8. Case studies of community food initiatives

The research commissioned from the Centre of Civic Innovation also included case studies of five community food initiatives operating across Glasgow: Glasgow South-East Food Bank, Glasgow North-East Food Bank, The Courtyard Pantry, The Base Pantry, and Threehills Community Supermarket. These community initiatives illustrate a variety of approaches to addressing food insecurity, from emergency food aid to social retail models, reflecting the varied needs of communities across the city. Some rely on food surplus redistribution for their food supplies, which can be unreliable and, arguably, continue the reliance on charitable food aid.



Across all five initiatives, several shared themes emerged: growing demand for support; the importance of choice, dignity, and community voice; and the recognition that food insecurity is rooted in insufficient income, combined with a lack of access to affordable, nutritious food. While traditional food banks continue to meet acute crises, pantries and social supermarkets are reshaping how communities can access locally available, affordable, nutritious food – potentially making a low income go further. Together, these services form a diverse and complementary ecosystem of support; addressing urgent need, increasing access to affordable, nutritious food, promoting dignity, and helping build pathways out of poverty through provision of financial advice, community connection, training, and collaboration. Their shared emphasis on dignity, community involvement, and holistic support demonstrates a shift away from emergency food provision and toward more integrated, community-rooted solutions that are better able to address both the symptoms and causes of poverty.

9. Test of change projects

Results from research commissioned from the CCI and other information gathered throughout this project identified some areas of Glasgow with particularly high levels of food insecurity. A small test of change was developed with community organisations in two of these areas to understand if the provision of money-equivalent vouchers instead of, or alongside, emergency food aid could encourage more community members in immediate financial need to engage with wider services that offer longer term support to help avoid or reduce future food crises. Participants were offered money-equivalent vouchers for their chosen supermarket to enable inclusion of people with NRPF, meaning that this approach was [‘towards cash-first’](#) as it did not provide recipients with a cash payment.

Analysis of surveys completed by participants who received vouchers as part of this test of change indicate that 94% expected to spend it on food when they received the voucher and 95% reported a month later that they had spent it on food. When asked about the impact the voucher had, participants reported:



“Reduced the need
to use food bank”
32%



“Could afford to choose
the food we want”
79%



“Could buy
healthier food”
26%



When asked if participants used another service for the first time when they got the voucher (e.g. advice hub), 89% said they had. Other responses demonstrated the value of the vouchers to recipients:

- ➡ People reported being happier (67%), less stressed (44%) and more confident (17%) as a result.
- ➡ “I felt valued, built my self-esteem.”
- ➡ “It helped me get on my feet.”

When asked what kind of support they would prefer in the future, 90% stated they would prefer a supermarket voucher to a food bank referral in the future.

Although this was a small-scale test of change in two community organisations, it demonstrated that providing the cash-equivalent supermarket vouchers helped increase choice and dignity, reduced reliance on food banks for some participants, encouraged engagement with wider support and had a positive impact on their mental wellbeing.

Evaluating the Cash-First Project

The Cash-First Project in Glasgow took a systems approach to addressing food insecurity; aiming to improve partnership working across Glasgow, increasing collaboration between public and third-sector organisations, increasing awareness of existing services and promoting the use of existing referral pathways. In order to reflect on and assess the impact of the activities undertaken as part of the project, several approaches were used: a Ripple Effect Mapping exercise, results from training surveys and feedback from the Fair Food for All Partnership.

Findings

- ➔ **Partnership approach:** Partners welcomed the collaborative approach taken in this project, particularly the shared space it created for learning, reflection and exploring key issues, as well as the opportunities for building trusted relationships. It was felt this approach had contributed to better coordination of city-wide activities. However, there was recognition that sustaining this level of collaboration requires dedicated support, such as a partnership, development or project manager. This was possible as a result of the Scottish Government funding for the project.
- ➔ **Cash-first approaches:** Partners recognised that cash-first approaches may not be possible or appropriate in all circumstances. The need for some form of emergency food aid in the long term was widely considered necessary, albeit undesirable, but there was also a shared ambition that everyone accessing emergency food support should be offered access to wider, wraparound support that is appropriate to their individual circumstances.
- ➔ **Access to food:** Food insecurity is primarily driven by inadequate incomes⁴ meaning that people are unable to afford good quality, nutritious, appropriate food for themselves and their households. Over half of the callers to Glasgow Helps identified access to food, rather than affordability alone, as their primary concern. While it is



difficult to unpick the extent to which this is due to inadequate income, it suggests that in some parts of Glasgow, people either lack access to local, affordable, nutritious food options or face barriers such as limited availability, unaffordable or inaccessible transport, or factors related to a disability. This indicates that responses to food insecurity that address both financial and non-financial barriers are needed.

➔ **Data:** Accessing data held by partners proved to be more challenging than initially expected, which restricted how much information was available to guide the project. Still, research commissioned by the Centre for Civic Innovation (CCI) was able to access some City Council data, revealing that a significant percentage of Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) applicants and Glasgow Helps (GH) callers reported food insecurity as a reason for seeking help during the study period.

The CCI report also highlighted that around a third of SWF payments went to households with children during the period studied in 2024, with slightly over a quarter (28%) of callers to GH also being from households with children. This finding also reflects the high level of need that exists in households without children.

Glasgow has an extensive collaborative, cross-sectoral [Child Poverty Programme](#) focussed on supporting low-income families. This recognises the significant adverse effects of childhood poverty, as its consequences can endure throughout an individual's life, leading to poverty becoming self-perpetuating for individuals and recurring across generations. Addressing these cycles offers substantial benefits for health and wellbeing as well as for public finances and the economy. However, evidence gathered from this project demonstrates that working-age households without children are also facing difficulties in affording basic necessities, and require additional support. This aligns with the feedback from community partners who report that a significant proportion of their service users are working-age adults without children.

Although the data on disability status for SWF applicants was completed by less than half of applicants, people who reported a disability accounted for a quarter of SWF applications. This is consistent with evidence showing that people with a disability are more likely to experience poverty and food insecurity^{4, 5}.



➔ **Pathways to support:** Whilst Glasgow has an established, publicly funded referral pathway for anyone seeking help (including those experiencing food insecurity) through the Glasgow Helps service, it was clear that there was limited knowledge, awareness and understanding of this service among some community organisations. To help address this, an in-person training and awareness raising session was delivered as part of the Cash-First Project. This included a presentation from Glasgow Helps staff information about their services and referral processes, as well as a follow up webinar to improve visibility and use of this key pathway to advice and holistic support. Continued promotion and embedding of this pathway will be needed.

➔ **Dignity and lived experience:** The findings from engagement with people with lived experience of reliance on emergency food aid in Glasgow highlighted the ongoing stigma and shame associated with living in poverty and how this affects their ability to seek support. These experts by experience suggested that one of the ways to improve cash-first approaches would be to provide consistent training for all staff and volunteers in community food initiatives on topics such as money advice services, the structural causes of poverty, and the importance of dignity and choice, including how these principles can be put into practice. This was reinforced by the survey conducted to identify the training needs of community food organisations and feedback from the in-person engagement event (see training and awareness raising sessions). Both demonstrated strong interest by community food organisations in training and awareness-raising sessions across a range of topics including, but not limited to, cash-first approaches. These findings directly informed the design and delivery of the training and awareness raising sessions organised, alongside continued promotion and dissemination of IFAN's Worrying about Money leaflets and Dignity in Practice resources.

➔ **A mixed model of food support exists:** Across Glasgow, community food initiatives including food banks, pantries, and community supermarkets, provide a spectrum of support responding to high levels of food insecurity. Food banks provide crisis-driven emergency food parcels to hundreds of households every month and play a vital role in responding quickly to need. However, they are facing increasing demand alongside reduced donations, often offering limited choice and experiencing ongoing sustainability challenges.



Pantries offer low-cost, choice-led models that emphasise community involvement, volunteer development, and access to wider support such as employability and financial advice, bridging the gap between crisis response and longer-term preventative support. Community supermarkets aim to move beyond emergency aid, operating a low-cost retail model that enables members to save money on groceries while also benefitting from social spaces and access to community services. Together, these models form a complementary ecosystem of support and are all essential in supporting people experiencing food insecurity in the current context.

➔ **Community food initiatives:** The case studies of the five community initiatives undertaken as part of CCI's research demonstrate that many community organisations already embed the key values that people accessing their services appreciate. Many reported taking time to talk to people accessing their services ensuring people feel welcomed and included, and creating a culture of empathy, compassion and care, with dignity and choice at the heart of their interactions. However, it is likely that some services are better informed than others, or that individual staff have differing levels of experience in working with clients facing poverty and food insecurity. Going forward, it is important that everyone working with people living in poverty or experiencing food insecurity is supported to further develop their understanding of poverty and the associated stigma, and the specific challenges faced by refugees and asylum seekers. All services should consistently offer a kind, compassionate and dignified approach, regardless of circumstance.



Reflections

The ambition set out in the Scottish Government's Cash-First Plan to end the need for food banks is significant, particularly in a context where many people in Glasgow continue to experience inadequate incomes and rising living costs⁶. Within a time-limited project with restricted funding, achieving substantial reductions in the need for food banks was unlikely. However, the project has made an important contribution by strengthening the systems, relationships and practices needed to support longer-term change.

A key achievement has been the development of a shared understanding of cash-first approaches and how these can be applied in practice. At the outset, the concept was often misunderstood or interpreted inconsistently, however through partnership working, training, and the development of shared resources, there is now greater clarity and confidence among partners and practitioners. This provides an important foundation for continued progress.

The project also demonstrated the value of a partnership-led, system-wide approach. Rather than creating new services, the focus on strengthening coordination, improving awareness, and making better use of existing services – particularly Glasgow Helps – enabled the project to complement existing activity and avoid duplication. This approach reflects the complexity of food insecurity and the need for joined-up responses across sectors.

The findings highlight that cash-first approaches are not a sufficient response on their own: for many people, there is no additional income available for them to access, either because they are already receiving their full entitlement or because they are not eligible for support, including those with no recourse to public funds, and in this context, emergency food provision will continue to play a role. It is therefore vital that anyone presenting for food support should be offered access to wider wraparound advice and financial support.

The project has also highlighted the importance of awareness and accessibility of support. Despite the existence of well-established services, particularly Glasgow Helps, awareness was inconsistent. Improving visibility and understanding of these services has been an important outcome of the project and remains a priority for future work.

There is a clear need to improve data-sharing systems to enable organisations across the city to access relevant and reliable data for future planning. This could include the development of a shared dashboard, similar to that used by the Child



Poverty Programme, drawing on data already being collected. Ideally this would be expanded to include data on poverty and food insecurity from public sector and third-sector organisations and be accessible to contributing organisations. This project has highlighted the importance of robust, locally available data for Glasgow – not only at national level and not solely through a child poverty lens, particularly to better understand the experiences of groups who may be underrepresented in existing datasets (e.g. people with disabilities, people with NRPF).

Despite limitations in the available data, the evidence and stakeholder feedback indicate that there are population groups who experience disproportionately high levels of food insecurity and whose needs are not being met by current approaches. These groups include disabled people and people with long-term health conditions, for whom the cost of essentials is often higher than for people without disabilities, and people with no recourse to public funds. While food insecurity in households with children is recognised as a pressing national issue, households without children are also experiencing high levels of food insecurity. Future approaches to supporting these groups require a multi-dimensional, holistic approach, including cash-first approaches, access to financial advice and other wraparound support, improved local access to affordable food, as well as action to increasing incomes, and advocacy for policy changes in line with the implementation of the [Minimum Income Guarantee](#).

With the recent publication of the [National Good Food Nation \(GFN\) Plan](#), there is renewed interest around improving health outcomes through food system change, including addressing current levels of food insecurity and creating environments that enable more people to access and eat healthy, nutritious foods. GFN local plans should take a holistic approach to food insecurity, including cash-first approaches and access to advice, alongside improved local access to nutritious, affordable food. Social supermarkets like [ThreeHills](#), alongside local, affordable markets such as [The Wester Common Unity Market](#) across the city, offer practical inspiration for how this can be achieved.

Glasgow Community Food Network's (GCFN) work with people with lived experience of food insecurity or of accessing community food initiatives across Glasgow has demonstrated the valuable insights that they can contribute to understanding the issues and shaping effective responses. There is a strong case for continuing to involve lived-experience panels in future projects and planning across Glasgow, as greater involvement from people with experience of food insecurity is essential to ensure services are well designed, tailored and responsive to the needs of service users. Consideration should be given to working with organisations who have already established lived-experience groups, such as the Poverty Alliance and GCFN, to ensure that best practice is followed and participants are appropriately supported throughout their involvement.

Engagement with people with lived experience reinforced the importance of dignity, trust and compassion in the delivery of support. While many organisations



already demonstrate these values in practice, there is a need for continued investment in training and workforce development to ensure these approaches are consistent across all services.

Overall, the Glasgow Cash-First Project has laid strong foundations for longer-term systems change. It has improved awareness, strengthened partnerships, and supported more consistent, dignity-based approaches to food insecurity. Sustaining and building on this progress will be essential to achieving meaningful reductions in food insecurity over time.

Next steps and recommendations

Members of the Fair Food for All Partnership reported that the Glasgow Cash-First Project had supported stronger partnership working across the city and identified the following key recommendations.

- ➔ **Sustain partnership working:** Sustain and strengthen the partnership through regular meetings, peer networking, and clear coordination, recognising its role in driving system-wide collaboration.
- ➔ **Embed cash-first and dignity-based approaches** more consistently across partner organisations, ensuring alignment with Good Food Nation outcomes.
- ➔ **Improve awareness and access:** Continue to strengthen visibility of training, resources, and support, using the Cash-first approaches in Glasgow webpage as a central information hub.
- ➔ **Align the work** of the Fair Food for All partnership with future strategic food planning, including Good Food Nation Plans and the Glasgow City Food Plan, to maximise impact and accountability.
- ➔ Establish a **Glasgow food insecurity forum** to support communication, collaboration, and sharing of practice across the diverse community food sector.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Glossary and acronyms

Acronym	What it stands for
CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau(x)
CCI	Centre for Civic Innovation
CWIN	Central and West Integration Network
DWP	Department for Work and Pensions
G15	G15 Thriving Places
GAIN	Glasgow Advice and Information Network
GCFN	Glasgow Community Food Network
GCPH	Glasgow Centre for Population Health
GH	Glasgow Helps
HSCP	Health and Social Care Partnership
IFAN	Independent Food Aid Network
NHSGGC	NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde
NRPF	No Recourse to Public Funds
SG	Scottish Government
SWF	Scottish Welfare Fund

Food insecurity: [A Menu for Change](#) defines food insecurity as “the experience of not having access to sufficient quantity or quality of food needed to stay healthy. The degree of severity of food insecurity can vary. Mild food insecurity involves worrying about being able to afford enough food, while at the most acute end of the spectrum severe food insecurity means experiencing hunger.” In line with this, the Scottish Government, in their [Cash-First Plan](#), define food insecurity as “the full range of experiences from worry regarding ability to afford food, through to compromising on quality and quantity of food and experiencing hunger.”

Cash-first approaches: According to the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN), “taking a cash-first approach to food insecurity at a local level in the current context of inadequate social security payments, absent or sparse local authority-run cash-first crisis support, and insufficient wages means prioritising cash-first or income-focussed interventions whenever possible alongside advice and support to maximise income and build financial resilience.”



[IFAN](#) has produced and published reports, [infographics](#) and other resources to explain and clarify cash-first concepts and approaches to food insecurity. Cash-first approaches provide people facing food insecurity with cash transfers or vouchers alongside advice and support to help maximise their incomes and prevent future crises. *“The effectiveness of a cash-first or income-focussed approach to tackling growing food insecurity was first highlighted in Scotland through the work of the [A Menu for Change project](#) (2017-2020). The term cash-first was first coined by the project and epitomises the notion that the answer to food poverty is increasing incomes rather than distributing ‘sticking plaster’ emergency food parcels – so cash-first not food first.”*

Providing food aid provides immediate but temporary relief for people facing food insecurity. Cash-first approaches offer more comprehensive support by enabling people to decide what their own immediate needs are, whether that includes groceries, paying an energy bill or shoes for their children. The ability to make these decisions can have an immediate impact on people’s lives and contribute to long-term wellbeing and resilience.

Food banks: The Scottish Government define a food bank as *“charitable or community organisations that distribute food parcels to people experiencing financial hardship. The two largest food bank networks in Scotland are Trussell 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.”*⁶

Pantries: The [Scottish Pantry Network](#) define a pantry as providing access to low-cost, good-quality, nutritious food. Anyone can access their local pantry for a small membership fee. Pantries are locally run and managed and offer additional services to their communities to reduce social isolation and improve emotional wellbeing. Some pantries are part of the Scottish Pantry Network, and some are part of [Good Food Scotland](#). Pantries often rely on surplus food.

Larders: Good Food Scotland defines a [larder](#) as offering high-quality essential goods which range from fresh produce to household items to *“help reduce financial strain on households struggling with food insecurity. The larder offers access to discounted groceries for a small monthly membership fee of £1. It is open to everyone, regardless of income or location, making it an inclusive resource for the community.”*

Community shops or community supermarkets: [Good Food Scotland](#) operate community shops and a community supermarket which are open to everyone and stock *“a wide range of fresh, frozen, and ambient foods, along with toiletries and cleaning products; all at affordable prices.... giving local people the chance to stretch their budgets a wee bit further while helping support food security in our community.”*



There is considerable overlap in how larders, pantries and community shops operate, with all of these models providing low-cost food and household items that are aiming to reduce the financial strain experienced by the communities they are based in, alongside other services such as advice hubs, financial advice and other activities. With the increased cost of food, fuel and household essentials, a combination of all of these models providing emergency food aid and targeting food insecurity are needed.

No recourse to public funds (NRPF): A person has no recourse to public funds ([NRPF](#)) when they are ‘subject to immigration control’⁷. This means they cannot claim public funds (benefits and housing assistance), unless an exception applies. The Joseph Rowntree Foundation published a paper entitled [“Families with no recourse to public funds are trapped in hardship”](#) which describes how low-income families with NRPF were at very high risk of hardship, with *“81% going without essentials like heating or suitable clothing in the six months before the survey, or enough food in the previous 30 days”*, compared to 59% of low-income families in which no one has NRPF.

Food was the most common essential which low-income families with NRPF were missing out on, with 59% cutting back or skipping meals in 2024, and 48% going hungry. Other low-income households also reported foregoing food, but at lower rates than this, at 43% and 33% respectively. Households with NRPF were more likely to have used a food bank in the previous six months than all other low-income households (15% compared to 11%). The lack of data being routinely or systematically collected (at national or local level) around people with NRPF means that their circumstances are not well understood.

The Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF): A discretionary scheme administered by local authorities based on an assessment of individual circumstances using the eligibility criteria set by the Scottish Government and which is split into [Crisis Grants](#) and [Community Care Grants](#). Crisis Grants are awarded in cash (Community Care Grants usually take the form of household furniture and white goods) and are therefore more relevant for the Cash-First Project. The Crisis Grants are limited to three applications per 12-month rolling period (this was temporarily frozen for COVID-19 from March 2020-March 2021).

Glasgow Helps (GH): [Glasgow Helps](#) is a partnership of the city’s public and voluntary sectors aiming to make it easier for the people of Glasgow to find the help and support they need. There is a website and a helpline which anyone can call to receive holistic support in line with their needs or be referred on to relevant services. GH aims to address food insecurity alongside the underlying issues that cause it, such as fuel poverty and debt, using a cash-first approach and income-maximisation principles. The service aims to deal with the presenting issue but also to understand the background and cause for emergency in order to get people to the right type of support quickly.

Ripple Effect Mapping (REM): [Ripple Effect Mapping \(REM\)](#) is a participatory, qualitative method that can capture the wider (intended and unintended) impacts of a project or programme⁸. It brings people together who have been involved in, or affected by, the delivery of a project or programme to visually map out what they have done and the impacts to date.

Zine: [Zine](#) is short for magazine or fanzine, a “*non-commercial often homemade or online publication usually devoted to specialised and often unconventional subject matter*”. They are typically produced by individuals or small groups with small scale circulation and have a homemade aesthetic, generally a mixture of text and images.

Appendix 2: A timeline of Glasgow’s Cash-First Project activities

2023-2024	
Month	Output
December 2023 to January 2024	Cash-First Project funding awarded to Glasgow
February to March 2024	Recruitment process and partnership discussions
April 2024	Cash-First Project Manager appointed
7th May 2024	First Fair Food for All (joint) Partnership meeting
25th June 2024	Second Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
July 2024	Cash-First communication plan developed
July 2024	Cash-First Concept Explainer developed and published online
27th August 2024	Third Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
September 2024	Cash-First webpage developed and hosted on GCPH’s website
10th October 2024	Webinar: Cash-first approaches: reducing the need for food banks in Glasgow
28th October 2024	Fourth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
30th October 2024	Webinar: Money Counts Training: a cash-first approach to food insecurity
31st October 2024	Glasgow Food Policy Partnership Annual Networking Meeting: Faiza provided a summary of Glasgow’s project
5th November 2024	In-person training session: An overview of Universal Credit Migration
19th November 2024	Webinar: Working with refugees and asylum seekers experiencing food insecurity
26th November 2024	Fifth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting



2025	
Month	Output
15th January 2025	Online workshop: Dignity in Practice
11th February 2025	Sixth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
12th February 2025	Webinar: Unlocking local resources in Glasgow: A guide to ALISS
March 2025	Commissioned research: • CCI summary of data on food insecurity in Glasgow • Delve report on lived experience of food insecurity in Glasgow (collaboration with GCFN) • Access to Advice (collaboration with Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Helps and Money Matters)
4th March 2025	Seventh Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
10th March 2025	Cash-First Community conference - Faiza provided a summary of Glasgow's Cash-First Project
April 2025	Training needs assessment survey sent to community food organisations
13th May 2025	Eighth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
27th June 2025	In-person networking event: Cash-First training and awareness raising for community organisations (with GCFN)
June 2025	Cash-First webpage updated with additional resources, including the Glasgow Helps leaflet
10th July 2025	Food for all: co-creating dignity in community food services podcast
27th August 2025	Ninth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
2nd September 2025	Webinar: Glasgow Helps and NHS GGC's crisis support in hospitals
11th September 2025	Webinar: What is Community Guiders training and how can it be used?
24th September 2025	In-person workshop: Partnership learning and reflection
8th October 2025	In-person workshop: Food insecurity and people seeking asylum: Understanding the barriers to accessing food (in collaboration with Govan Community Project's Food for All group)
9th October 2025	Online workshop: Poverty Awareness and Stigma training (in collaboration with Poverty Alliance and GCFN)
4th November 2025	Training: Working with people with lived experience of poverty (in collaboration with Poverty Alliance and GCFN)





12th November 2025	Online workshop: Food insecurity and people seeking asylum: Understanding the barriers to accessing food (in collaboration with Govan Community Project's Food for All group)
26th November 2025	Online workshop: Food insecurity and people seeking asylum: Understanding the barriers to accessing food (in collaboration with Govan Community Project's Food for All group)
November 2025 to January 2026	Test of Change underway in two community organisations
3rd December 2025	Training: Know your rights (in collaboration with Poverty Alliance and GCFN)
10th December 2025	Tenth Fair Food for All Partnership meeting
2026	
Month	Output
21st January 2026	Online workshop: Food insecurity and people seeking asylum: Understanding the barriers to accessing food (in collaboration with Govan Community Project's Food for All group)
21st January 2026	In-person workshop: Framing and values (in collaboration with Poverty Alliance and GCFN)

Appendix 3: A summary of training and awareness-raising sessions delivered as part of the Glasgow Cash-First Project

Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
2024			
10th October 2024	Cash-first approaches: reducing the need for food banks in Glasgow	Tying in with the Challenge Poverty Week theme of food, this webinar provided an overview of cash-first approaches and examples from across Glasgow, including financial inclusion and advice services. It had speakers from Glasgow City Council's Child Poverty Programme and Trussell's Access to Advice service. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	195 attendees



Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
30th October 2024	Money Counts Training: A cash-first approach to food insecurity	Delivered by the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) in collaboration with Trussell and Citizens Advice Scotland colleagues, this webinar provided an overview of poverty and food insecurity, Trussell food bank use in Glasgow, Citizens Advice Bureau services and using the IFAN Worrying About Money leaflet to initiate conversations around money and advice. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	83 attendees
5th November 2024	Universal Credit managed migration	Delivered by the Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, this in-person session focussed on the managed migration of universal credit, the administrative process involved, and how to support clients with the protections available to ensure these were not lost.	21 attendees
19th November 2024	Working with refugees and asylum seekers experiencing food insecurity	Delivered by the Scottish Refugee Council, this webinar provided a summary of the rights and supports available to refugees and asylum seekers, the reasons they experience food insecurity and sources of support available. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	128 attendees
2025			
15th January 2025	Dignity in Practice online workshop	Facilitated and delivered by Govan Community Project's Food for All group which has lived experience of being refugees or asylum seekers, this online workshop discussed the asylum process and practical ideas for organisations on how to enhance the dignity of asylum seekers they support.	33 attendees





Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
12th February 2025	Unlocking local resources in Glasgow: a guide to ALISS	Delivered by the A Local Information System for Scotland (ALISS) team, this webinar provided an overview of this online directory of health and wellbeing services, resources, and support networks across Scotland. The webinar highlighted how the ALISS platform can be used to improve service delivery, empower communities and enhance collaboration across sectors. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	75 attendees
27th June 2025	Cash-First training and awareness raising for community organisations	This was an in-person session co-organised with GCFN which aimed to increase awareness amongst front-line service providers, particularly in the community sector, of the support available across Glasgow to people experiencing food insecurity. Glasgow Helps, a partnership of the city's public and voluntary sectors aiming to make it easier for the people of Glasgow to find the help and support they need, provided a short presentation of the support and services they provide. There were also presentations from Glasgow's No Wrong Door team who work alongside Glasgow Helps and other parts of Glasgow City Council's Child Poverty Programme, and Glasgow's Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS), followed by group breakout sessions to discuss training needs and informal networking opportunities. The presentations from this session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	36 attendees



Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
2nd September 2025	Glasgow Helps, and NHSGGC's crisis support in hospitals	This webinar aimed to increase awareness of Glasgow Helps and NHS Greater Glasgow & Clyde's crisis support in hospitals, highlighting available services and opportunities for collaboration. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	40 attendees
11th September 2025	What is Community Guiders Training and how can it be used?	This webinar provided an overview of what community guiders training is, how it can be used to support communities, how it was developed with local partners in Dundee, an overview of the four training modules, the difference between advice and guidance, how this model fits with other training and the opportunity to discuss thoughts about this training. The presentations and recording of the session are available on the Cash-First webpage.	23 attendees
24th September 2025	Creating an enabling environment for cash-first: using Ripple Effect Mapping	This in-person workshop used Ripple Effect Mapping: a participatory, qualitative approach to evaluation that can capture the wider impact (intended and unintended) of a project. Participants considered the intended and unintended impacts of the project, who or what has been impacted and what the long-term impact of the project might be. More details on this workshop can be found in the Ripple Effect Mapping workshop section of this report.	10 attendees
8th October 2025	Food insecurity and people seeking asylum (session 1)	Facilitated and delivered by Govan Community Project's Food for All group which has lived experience of being refugees or asylum seekers, this online workshop discussed the asylum process and practical ideas for organisations on how to enhance the dignity of asylum seekers they support. Participants also learned about the free tools and resources that have been co-produced by this group.	5 attendees



Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
9th October 2025	Poverty awareness and stigma	This online workshop was co-organised with GCFN and delivered by the Poverty Alliance . It explored poverty, its causes and solutions, and ways to challenge stigma. The session included recent data, case studies, and opportunities to reflect on participants' own perspectives and experiences.	12 attendees
4th November 2025	Working with people with a lived experience of poverty	This online workshop was co-organised with GCFN and delivered by the Poverty Alliance , and focussed on how lived experience can be used to shape services and projects that truly work for the people who use them. It explored the ethics and practices of working with people with lived experience of poverty, and how to embed their perspectives meaningfully into projects to make services more relevant, impactful, and connected to the people they aim to support.	12 attendees
12th November 2025	Food insecurity and people seeking asylum (session 2)	Same as session 1.	8 attendees
26th November 2025	Food insecurity and people seeking asylum (session 3)	Same as session 1.	3 attendees
3rd December 2025	Rights in Action	This online workshop was co-organised with GCFN and delivered by the Poverty Alliance . It discussed human rights and how they can be used to tackle the causes and consequences of poverty. Participants explored poverty as a human rights issue, examined case study examples of rights in practice, and identified practical actions to take forward.	8 attendees

Date	Name of session	Details of the session	Number of attendees
2026			
21st January 2026	Food insecurity and people seeking asylum (session 4)	Same as session 1.	16 attendees
21st January 2026	Framing and values	This in-person workshop was co-organised with GCFN and delivered by the Poverty Alliance . Based on research by FrameWorks, this workshop offered practical advice on how to frame communications around poverty to build greater public support for the measures we need to end the injustice of poverty in Scotland.	20 attendees

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