

# Ending Poverty Related Hunger in Edinburgh

An Edinburgh Partnership Strategy

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## 1. Introduction

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In September 2020 the Edinburgh Poverty Commission published their final report – [A Just Capital](#). Their findings challenged the city to end poverty in Edinburgh by 2030, and to make sure that Edinburgh can be a city in which:

- *“No one has to go without the basic essentials they need to eat, keep clean and stay warm and dry”.*

To meet this goal, the Commission made seven calls to action for the city to deliver. Among these, the report called on City of Edinburgh Council, EVOC and local organisations to improve the co-ordination of support services for citizens experiencing food insecurity or at risk of poverty related hunger. In doing so, commissioners reported that:

- *“Emergency food support should not become locked in as a fourth emergency service but serve as a gateway to other support that will ease isolation and build human connection and kindness where it has been lacking.”*

In response to this call to action, Edinburgh Partnership committed to the development of a new strategy setting out the partnership responses needed to end poverty related hunger in Edinburgh.

### **Developing the strategy**

A draft strategy was developed by a core working group led by officers from the City of Edinburgh Council and EVOC. The group led a process of research and engagement including workshops with stakeholders, service providers and the End Poverty Edinburgh citizen’s group, data gathering and analysis.

The draft strategy described a vision, principles, and outline actions needed to meet the challenge set by the Edinburgh Poverty Commission. It was published on the Council’s Consultation Hub for 12 weeks and promoted across partnership networks to encourage people from all parts of Edinburgh to give their views and opinions.

Alongside this consultation, additional research was commissioned to further understand and gather insights from the experiences of users of food support services.

Feedback from the consultation and the research has been used to further develop this strategy and the actions needed to end poverty related hunger.

## 2. Scope and Strategic Context

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This strategy is part of the city’s response to the Edinburgh Poverty Commission’s call to end poverty in Edinburgh. It recognises that ending poverty related hunger needs action to tackle the root causes of poverty, across all seven areas identified by

the Commission. While emergency food provision has an important role, the key is to support people out of poverty. And access to nutritious, affordable food has an important role in reducing inequalities in health and wellbeing.

### Edinburgh Poverty Commission Calls to Action



The strategy is developed as part of the overall programme of actions underway to address poverty in Edinburgh. These include:

The **Edinburgh Partnership Community Plan**, and its three priority programmes to ensure people have enough money to live on, people have access to work, learning and training opportunities, and people have a good place to live. Associated key Edinburgh Partnership programmes aligned to this work include the development of Community Wealth Building approaches and [Thriving Local Places](#), a re-shaping of the relationship between Edinburgh Partnership partners and city residents.

The **City of Edinburgh Council Business Plan**, which incorporates ending poverty by 2030 as one of three priorities for Council and includes a range of actions across place-making, housing, homelessness, education, income security, transport, and family support within its [End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan](#).

[Growing Locally](#), Edinburgh's first food growing strategy and its goals to tackle food insecurity and promote community wellbeing through food programmes across the city. The Edible Edinburgh Partnership is a key stakeholder in this work and its vision for good food to be accessible for all, is an important input into this strategy's development.

[The Good Food Nation \(Scotland\) Act 2022](#), spans social and economic wellbeing, health, environment, and economic development and includes the aim that everyone in Scotland has ready access to the healthy, nutritious food they need. The principles and action areas in Scottish Government's ambition to [end the need for foodbanks](#) and [Best Start, Bright Futures](#), its 2022-2026 Tackling Child Poverty

Delivery Plan, and its [vision for a wellbeing economy](#) are also shared in the development of the current strategy.

Within the context of these wider actions to end poverty, this strategy aims to improve co-ordination, access, and impact of support for people experiencing food crisis, including:

- **Cash first supports:** this refers to cash grants for people experiencing food crisis through statutory and third sector programmes; and to income maximisation and money advice services which aim to help prevent future need.
- **Free or low-cost food provision:** Food banks, food pantries, free meal projects (including delivery, takeaway, and van outreach services), healthy meal kits, and school breakfast clubs. In most cases these projects also promote access to cash first, advice and other supports alongside direct food provision.
- **Community food initiatives:** Including projects which provide support for wellbeing, skills, and capacity building alongside free or low-cost food provision. Projects include community meals, community cafes and food markets, cook clubs, cooking and nutrition courses, and skills development support.

Edinburgh has a responsive, creative third sector which includes community food organisations. This existing expert knowledge and experience provides strong foundations for the strategy.

### 3. Poverty related hunger in Edinburgh – the challenges

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The findings from engagement activities and consultation have identified a number of key challenges for people in Edinburgh, and the food crisis networks established to provide support. A summary of these findings shows challenges relating to:

- **High and rising need and demand:** the rising living costs and falling real incomes among poorer families across the UK is likely to lead to a significant increase in severe poverty and hardship throughout 2023-24.
- In September 2022 a UK-wide survey showed<sup>1</sup>:
  - A quarter (26%) of households with children reported food insecurity in the previous month, compared with a tenth (11%) in August 2021
  - Food insecurity has increased faster for households with children than those without children where the increase was from 7.8% in January 2022 to 16% in September
  - Households who are food insecure are more likely to be affected by rising energy cost: 60% were using appliances less for cooking compared with 28% of households with no food insecurity
- **Capacity and resources to respond to need:** Even before recent increases in need, service providers were experiencing difficulties in securing the capacity needed to meet demand. The challenge of sourcing sustainable funding is common across providers. Third sector providers note the significant time and resources needed to pull together funding from multiple sources, as well as challenges in securing core funding or funding for more than one financial year. Such circumstances, providers note, provide a barrier to innovation, long-term planning, staff recruitment and retention, and collaboration across the food support community.
- These challenges have been exacerbated in recent months by the increasing cost of supplies, difficulties accessing donations, and other supply chain challenges arising from the war in Ukraine, and ongoing impacts of Brexit. These pressures are impacting on community organisations' resources, staff retention and their ability to operate.
- **Stigma:** the stigma of being in poverty and of accessing supports is considered by some organisations to be the biggest barrier in addressing poverty, with people feeling too embarrassed or ashamed to seek help, or feeling judged or blamed for their circumstances, or experiencing 'gate-keeping' of support through excessive questions about whether they 'need' support.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://foodfoundation.org.uk/initiatives/food-insecurity-tracking#tabs/Round-11->

- **The need for a more strategic approach to commissioning and funding:** Edinburgh Partnership members, the Council and Edinburgh Health and Social Care Partnership in particular, invest significant resources into a range of food support organisations and activities. The collective scale, range, and impact of this investment, however, is not well understood, nor is it guided by shared a policy objective or strategic framework. There is, however, a recognised need for stable core funding for these services
- **A need for improved partnership working and collaboration across the sector:** Providers and stakeholders across the sector demonstrate a strong willingness and ability to collaborate effectively when need arises. There is a clear culture of partnership and innovation across organisations in Edinburgh working to address poverty related hunger.
- At the same time, however, while individual groups of organisations work well together, there is no single network or forum helping providers in all parts of the city to share knowledge, skills, and capacity, or to collaborate on opportunities for fund raising or project development. The lack of such a network also makes it more difficult to co-ordinate city wide responses, particularly in the face of current and future crises.
- Examples of food support networks in other local authorities have been identified as useful routes to help:
  - Understand and assess the effectiveness of support to address poverty related hunger
  - Develop and promote common principles across food support systems and improve alignment between different types of support (e.g., cash first, money advice and food bank services)
  - Share capacity and resources, including warehousing, skills, staff, and technical resources, and
  - Collaborate effectively to source external funding.
- **Gaps in access, variability of standards:** Work carried out to date highlights concerns over gaps and inconsistencies in the availability of support across the city. These include areas of the city which are under provided relative to need, lack of access to out of hours or weekend support, and inconsistent standards relating to issues such as food quality, nutrition, and hygiene, guidance on 'cash first' support, and the embedding of appropriate income maximisation advice, family and household support to prevent future need.
- There is also variability among volunteers in their approach to people seeking support and their level of knowledge and awareness of nutrition as well as the causes of poverty. If someone trying to access a service has a negative first experience with a staff member or service, it can immediately put them off

seeking support for a long time, and subsequently, prolong their time in poverty.

- **Communication and awareness:** the need for improved promotion of food support available to people in Edinburgh was expressed throughout the research and engagement, as well as for communications to be accessible to all groups of people and for messaging to be stigma-free
- Local examples of promotion campaigns in areas such as west Edinburgh provide a useful model. Further work is needed to identify approaches across all parts of the city.

## 4. Vision and principles

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### Vision

In response to these challenges, partners have identified a vision to guide the work of the city.

Central to this vision is the recognition that without poverty, there would be no poverty related hunger, and so it is crucial that this strategy is supported by a wider programme of actions to end poverty across the city, as set out in the End Poverty in Edinburgh Delivery Plan.

Edinburgh Partnership members should commit to ensuring that:

- **No one in Edinburgh needs to go hungry due a lack of money**, that
  - When do people fall into food crisis, Edinburgh networks aim to give a **cash first** approach to providing support
  - Where emergency food provision is needed, people can also access wider support in ways that are **safe, dignified, respectful**, and **prevent future need**, and that
  - **Community food initiatives** are available in all parts of Edinburgh which give people access to affordable, nutritious food, build people's **wellbeing**, improve **skills and confidence**, and play a role in prevention and early intervention by helping people access the wider supports and social interaction they need to get by
  - **All supports are non-stigmatising**



## What do we mean by 'Cash First'?

Food insecurity in Edinburgh is caused by too much poverty, not too little food. The evidence shows that the key drivers of food insecurity are income crises in a household caused by problems of access to and adequacy of social security benefits, low pay and insecure work, problem debt, and the rising cost of living.

To end poverty related hunger in Edinburgh, nothing is more important than improving access to an adequate and secure income.

Within this context, a '*cash first*' approach means that people who are experiencing food insecurity have the opportunity to access:

- Available crisis fund support to help them afford the food they need (via Scottish Welfare Fund, Hardship Fund, and third sector operated crisis funds), and
- Advice and support to help them maximise their income, manage debts, access available benefit entitlements, and improve employment prospects.

In a cash first approach, local partners commit to doing all they can to offer such supports at the first point of contact for people in immediate food crisis. Where direct help to access food is required – via foodbanks, food pantries, or community meals this is provided in a way that maximises dignity and reduces future need. This means ensuring that the offer of ongoing support to maximise income and manage money problems is made alongside and embedded into every food support service.

## Principles

Delivery of this vision should be guided by four core principles, underpinned by stigma-free responses, to which all partners and stakeholders are committed.

- **Led by lived experience:** The design and review of programmes to end poverty related hunger should be done with and alongside people who have lived experience of food crisis and have relied upon emergency food support in Edinburgh.



- **Dignity by design:** Shame and stigma are key barriers that stop people from seeking help when in a food crisis. People's experience of getting help and the way support is provided can make a significant difference to whether a person is able to avoid future crisis. Dignity by design in approaches to poverty related hunger means ensuring that people can access the support they need:
  - Based on human rights, recognising that the right to adequate and nutritious food is a fundamental human right, as well as the right to a choice of food
  - In trusted places where they feel safe and comfortable, are treated with kindness and where the needs of their pets are considered too
  - With relationships at the heart of the response and people have choice and control over the support they receive
  - In ways that make sure there are no wrong doors and no handoffs, and no complicated, intrusive forms
  - Quick when needed with access to wider support at a time that is right for them
  - Through holistic support that aims to help people build resilience and move on from poverty, as well as dealing with immediate crisis needs
  - Through responses that are flexible enough to meet the needs of local communities and respects local knowledge about what works, and
- **Shared standards of quality:** Programmes to end poverty related hunger in Edinburgh should aim to meet common, shared standards of quality in:
  - Providing access to affordable, good quality, nutritious food that meets cultural needs and food hygiene standards
  - Ensuring staff and volunteers are supported and trained to appropriate standards
  - Ensuring cash first, income maximisation and other advice supports are offered and available to people and are of a required agreed standard, and
  - Support is simple to access and swift to respond.
- **Equality of access:** People in all parts of Edinburgh, from all communities should be able to access support when they need it. Partners in Edinburgh should work towards a principle of ensuring:
  - Appropriate levels of food crisis support are accessible in all areas of the city, without artificial geographical boundaries

- Delivery of food crisis support recognises and addresses physical and digital barriers to access, as well as the need for availability in evenings and weekends
- The provision, promotion, and communication of the support available is co-ordinated across the city so that people know how and where to get support, taking account of language, cultural, literacy and disability related needs, including people with learning disabilities and people who are neuro-diverse

## 5. Actions

The engagement and analysis carried out to support the development of this strategy suggests five areas of action for Edinburgh Partnership members and stakeholders to prioritise.



Actions for Implementation	
<b>Improve networking and collaboration</b>	<i>Build on existing partnership structures to establish an Edinburgh Food Poverty Network (EFPN) with a remit to:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bring together organisations working to end poverty related hunger in Edinburgh</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improve understanding of shared challenges and opportunities</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to engage with citizens with lived experience and collaborate in the design of projects and programmes</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share best practice, understand, and monitor the effectiveness of interventions and supports</li> </ul>
<b>Maximise capacity and secure sustainable resources</b>	<i>Through the proposed EFPN and other networks, partners should:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek ways to share capacity and resources more efficiently across partner and stakeholder organisations (including food, skills, technical resources, warehousing)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop improved referral pathways and communication routes across partners to maximise the impact of available capacity</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider options for commissioning processes to deliver greater security of funding for organisations</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborate on development of proposals to secure external funding for projects aligned to this strategy</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with private and statutory sector to build capacity/resources; work with supermarkets to get discount cards and maximise opportunities through cafes in hospitals, colleges, and schools</li> </ul>

## Actions for Implementation

<b>Set agreed standards and principles</b>	<i>Through the proposed EFPN and other networks, partners should:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working with people who have experiences of poverty and using supports, identify what stigma-free supports mean in practice, to inform implementation</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the standards for food and support which will underpin provision across the city: these will span quality, nutrition, hygiene, and dignity and ensure alignment with guidance including Food Standards Scotland</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify the actions needed to communicate and embed these standards, including staff and volunteer training and support</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop agreed standards and working principles for ensuring that 'cash first' and advice supports are available and promoted throughout food crisis supports.</li> </ul>
<b>Improve accessibility of support by addressing gaps in provision</b>	<i>Through the proposed EFPN and other networks, partners should:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve understanding of gaps in current provision, and collaborate on solutions</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop mechanisms for cash first</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek ways to ensure that citizens in all areas of the city have swift and easy access to the full range of supports needed (including cash first, crisis food support, and community-based food and wellbeing initiatives); and that referral processes and eligibility are appropriate</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve data collection and monitoring of impact to ensure that supports are accessible to all communities and groups in the city; use existing data more effectively to target support</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop and adopt best practice standards for accessibility for food crisis support including language, cultural, literacy and disability related needs and for promoting wider support; ensuring alternatives to digital access</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how schools and wider education could be most effective in building knowledge and confidence in buying, preparing, and using food</li> </ul>
<b>Improve communication and awareness</b>	<i>Through the proposed EFPN and other networks, partners should:</i>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a communication strategy to ensure that people (citizens and staff) know where and how to get help, embedding stigma-free messaging and addressing the needs of specific groups (language, disability and access/suitability of digital access)</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider the potential of using reducing food waste as a positive message and a way of reducing any stigma which may be linked to support.</li> </ul>

## Actions for Implementation

- Explore options to develop an accessible information hub providing access to the full range of food support resources in all areas of the city
- Use grassroots and community groups to expand reach