

FOOD INSECURITY

Food Insecurity is a term which is often spoken of and the definition of this is the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food.

Food Banks are vital supporting mechanisms for families and individuals who have found themselves in poverty in our communities.

They are often the very first point of contact which someone who has fallen into harder times will have with a supporting organisation, and it's so often the case that their first interaction can frame the whole of their future fight against poverty.

Research has found that food insecurity is associated with increased risks of some birth defects, anaemia, lower nutrient intakes, cognitive problems and aggression and anxiety.

Food Banks offer emergency food supplies in form of food parcels for between three days and a week depending on the needs of either the individuals or the families who are struggling at that time. Food Banks offer non-judgemental support and free food.

Food poverty is on the rise throughout Scotland and our Anti-poverty Strategy's projects and initiatives are in place to directly tackle this. We've been providing support to our Food Bank providers through accessing additional funding both through our Anti-poverty area committee funding, and also through our Participatory Budgeting funding.

In addition, during the COVID-19 Pandemic, we've also helped with allocating funding from the Scottish Government's Hardship Fund and through covering the costs of Fareshare membership to enable surplus food from supermarkets throughout Scotland to be delivered to Food Bank and other local community food providers.

These supplies are either packaged up and passed on through Food Parcels or in some cases the food is cooked into prepaid ready meals which can then be easily warmed up.

All of our Food Bank providers within our region offer additional supporting mechanisms for anyone who finds themselves in need and who visits a food bank for the first time.

Referrals onto additional support services are made and leaflets and details of where to find support for fuel poverty or to increase incomes and reduce costs are often provided at the first visit. This helps to make sure that vital hope is given at what can so often be one of the lowest points in someone's lives.

As part of our on-going support to Food Banks, we are offering to have their details listed on our website www.dumgal.gov.uk from 10 October 2020 to help individuals and families who need to access this help urgently and are not sure where to go.

The Trussell Trust in Scotland has cited unprecedented increases in the utilisation of food banks since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. This includes an 89% increase in the need for emergency food parcels during April 2020 as compared to the same month last year, and a 107% rise in parcels given to children.

Figures from the Independent Food Aid Network, a member of Sustain, show:

- 108% rise in the number of emergency food parcels distributed in July 2020 compared to same month last year
- 70 independent food banks across 20 local authorities in Scotland distributed at least 182,863 emergency food parcels between February and July 2020

Within Dumfries and Galloway by the end of August 2020, 61,463 Food Parcels had been distributed and 77,013 people had been provided with food.

In March 2020, Dumfries and Galloway entered lockdown as part of the national response to a rise in COVID-19 cases. As part of the framework to support this, Dumfries and Galloway Council formed a Community Cohesion Team with representation from:

- Dumfries and Galloway Council
- Dumfries and Galloway Health and Social Care
- Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway

In May 2020, a team were brought together to look at the following areas:

- Explore the reasons for increased demand in Community Food Provision requests
- Collate examples of good practice both locally and nationally which support access to affordable household provisions
- Explore ways of generating further community-based initiatives to support access to affordable household provisions

We'll be adding more information to our Challenge Poverty pages throughout the year.

If you are someone in need or you know someone who is, please contact our Council by phone on 030 33 33 3000 and we will put you in touch with services who will be able to help you. Please don't put it off – give us a call today if you can and we can help you.