

# Fairer Moray Forum Food Poverty Action Plan Centred on Lived Experience



## “SHOCKED BY THE RISING NUMBER OF REFERRALS FOR EMERGENCY FOOD...”

Shocked by the rising number of referrals we were receiving for emergency food, and concerned that with welfare reform, and in particular the full roll out of Universal Credit in Moray, this was only set to increase, we decided that we could not simply carry on as a traditional foodbank supplying food parcels, and that we needed to become “food poverty activists”.

Initially we looked at what was happening in other areas and discussed setting up a poverty commission, - but our research took us to the work being done by Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, and inspired by what they had achieved we decided to follow their lead, and develop a Food Poverty Action Plan for Moray.

This resulted in us recruiting a small group of like-minded people, passionate

about preventing and mitigating poverty in our area, and forming the Fairer Moray Forum.

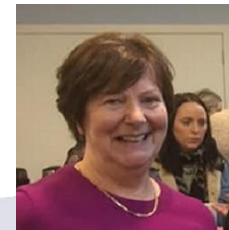
We resolved to raise awareness of poverty in Moray by producing a local “snap shot” from the most up to date information available, and to develop our food poverty action plan.

Due to the work being undertaken, FMF representatives were invited to be part of the community planning partnership, and to be involved in the creation of Moray’s first Poverty Strategy.

We are delighted that our Food Poverty Action Plan will form a key part of the overall Moray plan, and that the work of the foodbank in leading these developments has been recognised at CPP level.

I would like to personally thank all who contributed to developing this plan, and in particular to our panels of people with lived experience, whose comments and insights are invaluable, to our funders at Sustain and mentor Emily from the Brighton and Hove Food Partnership, and of course to Mairi our manager who has coordinated the consultations, delivered the workshops, collated the statistics, comments, and findings, and done the final write up.

All we need to do now is to collectively pledge our commitment to act on the plan!



Kathy Ross  
Chair Moray Foodbank  
Co-Chair Fairer Moray Forum

You are what you eat is self-evidently true. Our bodies and brains are literally built from the foods we eat. Food is one of the basic necessities of life, alongside air, water and shelter. When life involved greater physical labour for most people, food was necessary as fuel for the physical exertion involved.

But food has also always represented much more than fuel and survival. Food — its selection, preparation, presentation, and consumption — is central to many of our social gatherings and ceremonies. We use food to collectively acknowledge significant life events such as weddings or funerals; to celebrate feasts or special occasions; and to enjoy social interaction with friends and family. We gift food to say thanks, congratulations or to express love and friendship. Food also has psychological meaning and purpose. We don't just eat

when we're hungry. Some of us eat when we're happy, some when we're sad, some when we're anxious.

Humanity does seem to have solved the problem of food supply. There is now enough food produced to feed everyone in the world. But we haven't solved the problem of food distribution, as not everyone gets a fair share of that food. We haven't solved the problem of nutrition, as people can obtain sufficient calories — even excess calories — but still suffer from malnourishment. And there are growing concerns globally that food production processes might risk damaging the planet that we depend upon for life.

**Hunger and malnutrition should belong to an earlier era, firmly in the past.**

It is a tragedy for anyone to be going hungry in this day and age.

Hunger and malnutrition damage peoples' health, makes recovery from illness more difficult, and even affects how well people respond to medical treatment, on top of the stigma and anxiety that food scarcity can cause. Moray Foodbank is to be congratulated for its leadership and determination to change things for the better, through developing this plan in partnership with others. Together, we can work towards a world where everyone can eat well, stay well and live well.



Chris Littlejohn  
Deputy Director of Public Health,  
NHS Grampian  
Co-Chair Fairer Moray Forum

## FAIRER MORAY FORUM BACKGROUND

Concerned at a year-on-year increase in food bank use, Moray Foodbank decided that rather than just responding to the immediate need, something more had to be done at a strategic level to prevent people from facing food insecurity.

Recognising that food poverty is a complex issue and many factors come into play, it was felt a multi-agency approach was required. It became clear that there were pockets of work being undertaken in Moray to tackle various aspects of poverty but an overarching approach was lacking.

After speaking to key people in Moray it became clear that there was an appetite to address all forms of inequality, and the Fairer Moray Forum (FMF) was created. Members include representatives from Moray Foodbank, NHS Grampian, TSI Moray, Moray Citizens Advice Bureau, The Moray Council Housing, The Moray Council Education and Social Care, The Moray Council Benefits, Department for Work & Pensions, Richard Lochhead MSP, and Cllr Shona Morrison in her role as The Moray Council Convener.

The Fairer Moray Forum registered as an alliance with Sustain and a successful application to develop a food poverty action plan was made to their Food Power programme, a national programme aiming to strengthen local communities' ability to reduce food poverty.



“Something more had to be done at a strategic level to prevent people from facing food insecurity.”

## Consultation process

The Forum felt that it was important to consult with people who were either currently experiencing food insecurity, or who had experienced food insecurity in the past.

Various focus groups and one-to-one interviews were held with people who had lived experience, professionals and stakeholders.

## Action plan outcomes

After compiling and reviewing information gathered the top five priorities were seen to be:



### 1. Remove the stigma around poverty

There is a need to create more understanding of the broader impact of poverty and for people looking for support to believe that professionals empathise and are non-judgemental.



### 2. Income maximisation

It is important that people are claiming what they are entitled to. Pathways need to be clearer and simpler to ensure that people know where to go for benefit and budgeting support.

## Action plan outcomes cont.

After compiling and reviewing information gathered the top five priorities were seen to be:

### 3. Increase access to food/social value of food



Emergency food provision should be more accessible and professionals should make routine enquiries about food insecurity, passing referrals to the Foodbank without judgement. This then bypasses the need for someone to ask for help, and hopefully avoids some of the stigma often felt.

Other informal avenues to food provision should be increased, and a range of options including community larders, community meals, lunch clubs, holiday meal clubs and breakfast clubs should be developed in partnership, not only to provide food support, but valuable social contact.

### 4. Increase food knowledge



Cookery lessons should be provided to groups in a collaborative manner and in a practical way, based on economic means, and should be client-led.

### 5. Develop holiday food provision



More holiday food support should be created for families whose children would otherwise receive free school meals.



## **Other issues of note**

During the consultation it became clear that the rurality of Moray had an underlying impact on people's access to food and was a major contributor to food insecurity.

A shopping basket comparison clearly illustrated the higher prices that those living away from the main towns were forced to pay and the limited choices that people had. On discussion it was agreed that this was a situation that would be difficult to address but it was important to, firstly, highlight this disparity and, secondly, to ensure that community food provision services are available to as many communities of Moray as possible, particularly those in the most rural areas.

Following this, transport was also an issue that was repeatedly raised during the consultation process. For those living outside Elgin public transport was expensive, unreliable and infrequent meaning that people had fewer options when it came to shopping.

For car owners running costs can be significantly higher the more rural a person lives clearly shown by a simple fuel price comparison. In some instances, people were having to make the decision to give up their car forcing them to pay higher food costs and in some instances turn to the foodbank for crisis support. For others it was not an option to give up their car as it was vital in getting them to work; this meant that "fuel or food" choices had to be made, with some not able to provide lunch for themselves or again turning to the foodbank for crisis support.

Again, after discussion, it was felt that although an important factor in food insecurity, transport would not be a priority action in the food poverty action plan as there were other groups in Moray better placed to address it, such as the Moray Forum Transport Steering Group.

# OUTCOMES & ACTIONS

| Outcome 1: Remove the stigma around poverty |  |
|---|--|
| Action                                      |  |
| 1.1   | Treat clients with dignity and respect   |
| 1.2   | Provide services in a non-judgemental manner   |
| 1.3   | Develop community outreach in particular targeting rural communities and harder to engage groups |
| 1.4   | Raise professional awareness through training  |
| 1.5   | Raise awareness that working people also experience poverty                                      |
| 1.6   | Have an awareness of what support services are available and signpost/refer without question     |
| 1.7   | Work in partnership to link services, share resources and maximise impact                        |

| Outcome 2: Income maximisation |  |
|--------------------------------|--|
| Action                         |  |
| 2.1                            | Have an awareness of what financial support services are available and signpost/refer without question         |
| 2.2                            | Develop community financial outreach working in partnership with existing groups/events                        |
| 2.3                            | Raise professional awareness of benefits and financial support through training                                |
| 2.4                            | Develop a clear referral pathway to financial support services   |
| 2.5                            | Have open and honest discussions with clients around financial constraints and make it part of routine enquiry |



# OUTCOMES & ACTIONS

| Outcome 3: Increase access to food/social value of food |  |
|---|--|
| Action  |  |
| 3.1   | Develop community larders in partnership with Moray Foodbank |
| 3.2   | Provide cooking sessions and shared meals                    |
| 3.3   | Factor food into group work as appropriate                   |
| 3.4   | Work in partnership to develop community meals               |

| Outcome 4: Increase food knowledge |  |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Action                             |  |
| 4.1                                | Develop cooking sessions to support clients    |
| 4.2                                | Work with families to make better food choices |

| Outcome 5: Develop holiday food provision |   |
|---|---|
| Action                                    |   |
| 5.1                                       | Have an awareness of what holiday provision is available and signpost families                              |
| 5.2                                       | Actively ask families if they need additional food support and refer to Moray Foodbank/community larders    |
| 5.3                                       | Increase service provision during holiday periods and factor food into activities                           |
| 5.4                                       | Encourage older adults to attend lunch clubs especially during holiday periods when isolation can be higher |
| 5.5                                       | Remove the stigma around holiday provision  |

# CONCLUSION

Food poverty is a complex issue and is more than just the increasing number of people relying on emergency food bank support. Through this consultation it has illustrated that food poverty is a symptom of underlying issues, for example, low income, benefit changes, unemployment, debt, family break-ups, illness, transport issues, addiction issues, and the impact of rurality.

The actions developed in the food poverty action plan address more than just food insecurity and the most critical issue raised during consultation was the stigma around poverty and the importance of treating people in a non-judgemental manner.

Income maximisation is key, and measures need to be put in place to provide easier access to support and to ensure people are claiming all they are entitled to.

Rurality is also a significant factor and there is now a wider recognition that services need to be more accessible to those out-with the main towns of Moray.

Finally, any direct actions relating to food provision and increasing the social value of food will have additional benefit in providing life skills, healthier choices, and a reduction in social isolation.

“We do want to help ourselves, we just need encouragement and support and information to do it”

“I’ve been in a situation where sometimes, well, do I get electric or feed my bairn. I need electric to be able to cook for my bairn”

“Older people are very proud and don’t ask for help when they need it, they just get on with it and manage”

“I’m forced to go out to work or it affects my benefits but I can’t earn enough to cover the childcare and then have enough left to provide decent food”

# SUPPORT THE PLEDGE

## **I believe**

- Everyone in Moray should have equal opportunities.
- Tackling poverty is everyone's business
- Together we can make a positive difference to people's lives

## **I welcome**

- The Child Poverty Act
- Plans and actions by partnerships to reduce poverty

## **I commit to**

- Raise awareness and understanding of poverty in Moray.
- Ensure respect for individuals is at the core of our work
- Change our policies and the way we work to support individuals and families experiencing poverty
- Support local action to reduce poverty.
- Record actions I have taken in support of this Pledge

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Organisation: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

# CONTACT DETAILS

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