

**EMERGENCY FOOD PROVISION:
DIGNITY DURING COVID-19
ONLINE WORKSHOP REPORT**

Executive Summary



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Background:

As a response to the increase in food insecurity and consequent demand for emergency food provision resulting from the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Dignity Team made up of Nourish staff members, volunteers^[1] and peer network organisations (PNOs)^[2] designed and delivered a series of online workshops to ensure dignity was at the heart of emergency food provision.

Workshop Overview

Aims:

- + Develop a deeper understanding of dignity
- + Reflect on how dignity is enhanced / undermined in their practice
- + Begin developing practical ideas to enhance dignity in their practice

Content:

- + Introduction to Dignity in Practice project, development of the Dignity Principles^[3] and their adaptation during COVID-19
- + Interactive exercise to practice understanding of Dignity Principles in food provision
- + Presentation from a community food organisation detailing COVID-19 adaptations
- + Personal reflection on experience of dignity being enhanced / undermined and actions to take post-workshop to enhance dignity in participant's own projects

Delivery and participation:

Between the end of May and the end of June, 10 workshops were delivered with 137 participants. High demand meant waitlists had to be implemented. Most participants came from Scotland, with representation from every local authority area. Participants had a wide range of backgrounds and expertise, including community workers, food bank workers / volunteers, health and diet-related professionals, project managers, funders and board members. Attendees' feedback was overwhelmingly positive, emphasising their commitment to implement the Dignity Principles in their services.

Workshop findings:

Involving volunteers and PNOs as co-facilitators provided invaluable expertise and support. Co-facilitators highlighted the advantage of developing new skills, confidence and a sense of empowerment. Asking participants to reflect personally on a time when their dignity had been undermined propelled a deeper understanding of the concept in relation to emergency food provision and how it could be applied in practice. Participants were keen

[1] The volunteers in the Dignity Team are people who have lived experience of food insecurity.

[2] Peer Network Organisations are community-led organisations that have been involved throughout the Dignity Project. The support they offer centres the Dignity Principles, going beyond food provision to building resilient communities

[3] For an overview of the Dignity Principles click [here](#)

to be involved in spaces to network and share best-practice on enhancing dignity. Running the workshop online gave the opportunity to engage with people throughout Scotland with no added cost and travel times. However, it highlighted digital barriers such as access to broadband and technical equipment.

Follow-up survey:

Participants were invited to take part in a follow-up survey to reflect on: actions taken to enhance dignity; challenges encountered; and actions the Scottish Government, local authorities and local organisations could do take support their work . Of the 23 who responded, eighteen were interested in receiving ongoing support from the Dignity Team and fourteen wanted to become involved with the team.

Actions taken:

- + Taking more care when making food packages
- + Establishing feedback mechanisms
- + Developing toolkits to signpost people to whole-person support
- + Sharing workshop information within networks
- + Planning to run dignity workshops within local areas

Challenges faced:

- + Negotiating conflicting understandings of dignity within and between organisations
- + Increasing demand on emergency food
- + Lengthy waiting times to receive funding
- + Social-distancing measures that restricted face-to-face contact

Recommendations

Scottish Government:

The importance of the Scottish Government's role in supporting emergency food provision was clear. Survey respondents emphasised government policies and engagement with communities as a way to improve the effectiveness and the dignity of the services they provide.

- + Provide long term funding for premises and core costs
- + Increase awareness of the Scottish Welfare Fund
- + Support community organisations to procure fresh produce
- + Provide clearer updates to any changes on safety guidance
- + Ensure local authorities have sufficient funding to deliver basic necessities in times of emergency

Local authorities:

The three main themes emerging for the kind of support needed from local authorities were:

- + **dignity:** lead by example ensuring local authority food provision embeds the Dignity Principles, increase accessibility of Scottish Welfare Fund to enable cash-first support, make a dignified response to food insecurity a clear part of all anti-poverty agendas
- + **collaborative working:** identify a lead within each local authority responsible for learning from and integrating best practice, strengthen collaboration across organisations to create smoother referral pathways, involve community organisations in decision-making
- + **communication:** produce leaflets with information on accessing government support schemes and coordinate with community organisations for distribution, ensure regular updates on forms of government support available for community organisations

Local organisations:

Most respondents highlighted the benefits of increased partnership working across regional organisations working in a variety of sectors, expressing a desire to improve interagency collaboration and communication, particularly to avoid duplicating work.

Conclusion:

The online workshops brought together a range of stakeholders with different backgrounds and expertise in community and emergency food provision, including people from every local authority in Scotland. Participants were introduced to and reflected on the Dignity Principles in the context of COVID-19 responses and committed to take specific actions. A follow-up survey demonstrated that within weeks, some participants had already taken steps in improving how they communicated with people, the range of support they offered and opportunities for people to have more choice and control over their food. Challenges in implementing the Dignity Principles in community food provision suggest a need for further work to develop a more consistent understanding of dignity within the sector. Furthermore, the Scottish Government, local authorities and local organisations were all considered by respondents to have a role in supporting the enhancement of dignity. As a result, we intend to continue delivering online workshops to build greater capacity within the community food sector and to highlight and share best practice as it evolves.