

Dignity in Practice Learning Events

Key Findings Report



Dignity in Practice Learning Events

In winter 2021/22, we hosted a series of learning events for people involved in responding to food insecurity in Scotland, and for people who are working to promote rights-based approaches. This work was co-produced with our partners in the [Dignity in Practice project](#).

Learning Event Series Aims:

- bring together people throughout Scotland who design, deliver and take part in responses to food insecurity (community, local, national stakeholders);
- improve knowledge and understanding of the relationships between access to food, dignity, the right to food and the food system;
- inspire and support those who are interested in taking further action to promote dignity and human rights in response to food insecurity;
- provide opportunities for stakeholders throughout Scotland to consider how to put ideas into practice.

The event series was divided in two parts:

Part 1: Dignity and Choice through Financial Support	Part 2: Dignity and Choice in a Good Food Nation
Embedding Cash First Approaches, 25th November 2021	Affording to Eat Well in Scotland, 10th March 2022
Improving the Cash Offer, 2nd December 2021	Progressing the Right to Food in Scotland, 17th March 2022

Format

Each online event brought people from across Scotland together to hear about rights-based and dignified approaches already underway in Scotland and elsewhere. The events aimed to inspire participants and to give them space to reflect on how the learning from different approaches could be used in their local areas. The events included contributions from a range of people with experience trialling different approaches to preventing and responding to food insecurity, as well as dedicated time for small group discussions so that participants could share reflections on the learning and consider next steps. The events were recorded and the videos, along with each event's respective resources (presentation, activity material, articles, etc.), are now part of [Resource Hub](#) on our website.

Overall Findings

The Learning Events provided an opportunity to bring people from different sectors in one room. Together we learned from each other's work and explored possibilities for further promoting dignity and human rights in our responses to food insecurity. All events supported the necessity of approaching food insecurity holistically, where in terms of the right to food, food is perceived as much more than just nutrients.

Links which might not have otherwise been made were explored. For example, learning about the strategies behind Universal Free School Meals and the "Everyone Aboard" transport Poverty Alliance campaign in relation to targeted versus universal approaches. Particularly considering how for many people facing food insecurity the choice between transport and food often needs to be made. Further, how accessible transport can support people to access the food they need as well as being an enabler to take part in community life. As well as transferable lessons from other projects like the 'No Wrong Door' approach where the services provided for people facing homelessness are specifically tailored to their needs and to provide consistency and continuity, so people do not have to navigate the system on their own. Bringing these diverse conversations together allowed people involved in responses to food insecurity to learn from others and reflect on the possibility of applying lessons in their own work.

Participants represented a wide range of expertise, from the Voluntary and Community Sector, NHS, Councils, Advice Services, Academia to National Government. Across the four learning events, 22 Local Authorities took part (see chart below).

Local Authorities Participating across all Learning Events



Overall, the willingness of people from all sectors to be part of the Learning Events as moderators, speakers, facilitators, presenters, and advisors highlights the interest in the topic and the importance placed by participants on sharing good practice. The quality of conversations in the breakout rooms reflected the expertise of facilitators involved in their inclusive approach. Putting together the four events involved a huge amount of effort from many different people from diverse backgrounds, this is mirrored in the events' positive feedback and high attendance.

Feedback from Dignity Advisory Team

Members from the Dignity Advisory Team (DAT) were involved in the Learning Events in the following capacities:

- Supporting and providing feedback on the event design
- Moderators
- Presenters
- Panellists
- Breakout room facilitators
- Breakout room notetakers
- Breakout room experts

DAT members feedback on their involvement:

What did you like about the Learning Events?

- *The collaboration it encouraged. Raising awareness of what was happening and show folk/ organisations could pool resources and make better use of them.*
- *I loved the interaction in the breakout rooms and thought the presentations were excellent*
- *I liked that there were lots of really engaged people there - also variety and interactive nature*

What would you change about the Learning Events?

- *Nothing, thought they worked really well - maybe experiment with having one long breakout session rather than a few shorter ones.*
- *Maybe clearer instructions for some activities e.g. during the family diet exercise people had to keep being told they were not supposed to say how the family's meals could be improved but rather just give thoughts on it.*
- *Nothing.*

In relation to your own work and activities, what was useful about the Learning Events?

- *To learn about different points of view and experiences; to keep myself updated with regards to initiatives/policies*
- *Learning more about facilitation and different ways it can be done to good effect.*
- *It was great to hear what was happening in other local authorities to take these to our own local authorities as examples of what we can do*

Learning Events' Overview & Participants' feedback

Embedding Cash First Approaches: 25th November 2021

The first event focused on strengthening referral pathways and the tools and strategies that people in Scotland are using to empower frontline staff and volunteers to help people facing food insecurity access existing financial grants and entitlements. Speakers discussed how practical resources like the ['Worrying About Money?'](#) leaflets and [Money Counts](#) training courses are helping to build confidence to have 'quality conversations' and make active referrals to financial advice and support when someone is financial insecurity.

Speakers

- Hannah Biggs, ScotGen – learning from four local authority areas who have been developing and using [Worrying About Money?](#) cash first referral leaflets
- Dr Flora Douglas, Robert Gordon University – reflecting on research with frontline health professionals involved in financial inclusion pathways in the North East
- Sandra MacAllister, NHS Highland – development and delivery of the Money Counts training course for staff and volunteers who support people facing money worries to access financial advice and support

- David Ramsay, Homeless Network Scotland - sharing lessons from the No Wrong Door approach

Findings

Participants placed a strong emphasis on the importance of working in partnership and in collaboration with Local Authorities towards developing regional cash first leaflets and subsequent training:

- *Training and partnership working is key to progressing this initiative*
- *Collaboration between different agencies is key*
- *A real drive and understanding around the potentials and promises of partnership working and recognising the strengths of various avenues of support offered*
- *Local partnership working is key to a cash first approach*

Improving the Cash Offer, 2nd December

Building on November's discussion, this second event focused on the ways local authorities and third sector organisations are making cash and financial support more accessible and beneficial for people facing food insecurity. We delved into the learning from the 'Flexible Food Fund' in Moray and Argyll & Bute, and took a look at wider examples and approaches. Participants had an opportunity to consider what else the Scottish Government should include in its new [National Plan for Ending the Need for Food Banks](#).

Speakers

- Jayne Jones, Commercial Manager for Argyll & Bute Council and Chair of ASSIST FM
- Julie Semple, Manager of Bute Advice Centre and Coordinator of the Argyll & Bute Community Food Forum
- Norma Matheson, Benefits Manager for Moray Council

Findings

When asked what you are taking away from the discussions, people felt inspired by listening to examples of good practice and the creativity to use the 'Flexible Food Fund':

- *The success of these schemes (i.e. Argyll and Bute; Moray) is clear and they found ways to support a lot of people effectively*
- *Getting other ideas to help improve what is currently in place*
- *Cost effective methods of distributing cash*
- *Inspired by the projects, great work, ideas. Leaving very encouraged*
- *Importance of partnerships, collaboration, and innovation in delivering services*

Affording to Eat Well in Scotland, 10th March 2022

During the third event we showcased the learning of The Our Right to Food Project. The project has been working with groups of community advisors across Scotland to understand what people believe should be included in a weekly shopping list if a family was aiming for a balance of foods that meet the following criteria:

- Healthy 'enough'
- Most people would enjoy
- Good fit for people's lives

This event introduced what the lives of people in Scotland could look like if income from wages and benefits were sufficient. This was discussed within the context of the Scottish Government's vision of ending the need for food banks, and eradicating poverty by 2030, work is needed urgently to improve the prevention of and response to food insecurity today.

Speakers

Chelsea Marshall, Senior Project Officer, Nourish Scotland

Findings:

- People welcomed the opportunity to learn from the 'Our Right to Food Project'. It provided a realistic approach (what is normal) of what a family shopping habits looks like in practice and other important aspects that influence family choices. Most people were able to relate to what was presented:
 - *Work and family commitments shape food choices*
 - *Balancing aspirations with achievable*
 - *What people eat is decided by lots of different factors and not just income and time*
 - *Felt that there were a lot of calories on the Friday - but felt that the family were tired at the end of the week*
 - *The factors involved in the feeding a family are very complex*
 - *These are the kinds of things I would eat at home*
 - *What is socially acceptable or normal is a huge factor I hadn't considered before*
- People were able to relate to an important aspect of the Right to Food – food is not just about nutrients, fuel or talking about healthy eating, food is more than that, food is about community, pleasure, culture, connections, having choice and agency over what people can cook or eat:
 - *Sharing meals with family and friends*
 - *Cooking for friends and family*
 - *Joy of sharing and nourishing family and friends and community*
 - *Taste, enjoyment, memories, community, socialising, connection*
 - *Breaking bread together*

Progressing the Right to Food in Scotland, 17th March 2022

Our last event highlighted the responsibility that Scottish Government in a wide range of activities that affect how easy or difficult it is for people in Scotland to afford healthy, culturally appropriate, and sustainable food. We explored how national and local strategies to reduce the cost of living are affecting household budgets and people's ability to afford food with dignity and choice. We looked at Universal Free School Meals and transport to reflect on how current strategies are working and consider what else can be done at a local level to

take us towards a Scotland where everyone can take pride and pleasure in the food that we eat.

Speakers

Universal Free School Meals Panel:

- Chris Ross, Catering Manager at Edinburgh City Council and Vice Chair of ASSIST FM
- Nicky Joiner, Catering Officer in East Renfrewshire Council

Transport Panel:

- Suzi Murning, Campaigns Officer, The Poverty Alliance
- Vivien Opiolka, Development Officer, Central and West Integration Network

Moderated by Jayne Jones, Commercial Manager for Argyll & Bute Council and Chair of ASSIST FM

Findings:

- Participants strongly expressed the importance of meaningfully involving young people in the design of school meals. To embed dignity in this process, the design should be about more than just the food, encompassing the whole experience:
 - *How children enjoy eating with their peers should be better understood so that they want to eat in the school environment*
 - *It's been very inspiring to see the amount of thought and work that has gone into school meals and ensuring that dignity and choice are at the heart of them. It's no longer "like it or lump it" for sure!*
 - *Food as culture/fun/enjoyment*
- Participants found it inspiring to hear to real-live examples yet found it unfortunate that these are not occurring nationwide:
 - *Good work being done but still inconsistent across different local authorities*
 - *Importance of what your peers are doing - how to make sure that the school environment is a welcoming and tasty offer for secondary pupils too*
- Participants found it helpful to hear about transport in relation to food. Reflecting on the benefits and challenges of targeted versus universal approaches:
 - *Very helpful to understand more on the food / transport landscape*
 - *Free bus travel is more than just a free bus journey. It provides opportunity to participate*
 - *Interesting discussion on the right to mobility and targeted vs universal provision*
 - *Power analysis is at the heart of empowerment. This was a real in depth look at some players and levers in food security.*

