



Food banks and how the delivery of the Scottish Welfare fund can reduce the need for emergency food

Food banks continue to experience ever-increasing pressure at this time and are doing all they can to support people in financial crisis.

In Scotland, there are 135 Trussell Trust food banks and at least 105 independent food banks.

Local authorities in Scotland have a unique opportunity to support people who are turning to Trussell Trust and independent food banks by ensuring everyone who is eligible for a Scottish Welfare Fund crisis grant receives a cash-based response during this unexpected crisis. Evidence from the Trussell Trust and the Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) shows that a cash-based response is the most effective and dignified way to support anyone in financial crisis. By ensuring income is maximised first, the number of people seeking assistance from food banks can and could be significantly reduced.

Trussell Trust and IFAN recognise and value the effort that local authorities have put into streamlining access to the Scottish Welfare Fund at this time, such as redeploying staff to reduce decision-making time. The following list is based on our current knowledge and experience of why people are needing our services and what we believe would make it easier for some people to access to the Scottish Welfare Fund instead of needing a food parcel.

Trussell Trust and IFAN are keen to engage with local authorities to support people in financial crisis and at risk of food insecurity in this time of extraordinary crisis. Together with local authorities, we have a shared commitment to reduce the need for emergency food.

Suggestions for how the delivery of Scottish Welfare Fund can reduce the need for emergency food:

- Ensure people in financial crisis – regardless of where they present – are considered for crisis grants rather than being referred to a food bank in the first instance. Food banks are usually in a position to be able to list most common referrers and could work with you to provide feedback on which services need more information about the role of the Scottish Welfare Fund.
- Where a crisis grant is not appropriate, ensure all staff are equipped to make active referrals to financial advice and support services to address the root causes of any crisis and maximise income before a referral to a food bank is made.
- As COVID-19 has been classed as an exceptional circumstance, ensure that publicity about the Scottish Welfare Fund is updated and makes clear to referral agencies and potential applicants that the number of awards that a person can receive in a rolling year is not limited.
- Continue to review what evidence from applicants is essential and reduce this where appropriate to streamline the application process to be able to support people in crisis as quickly as possible.
- Work with local food banks to make sure they are aware of the SWF, any updates on how to access it and how to direct people to it in appropriate circumstances.
- Actively promote the Scottish Welfare Fund in public communications and on your website to increase awareness in the wider community.

For further discussion please contact:

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