Aberdeens
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Development of Cash First in Aberdeenshire

Cash First approach

- Ending the need for food banks in Scotland by collaboratively working to help people experiencing hardship improve access to emergency financial assistance as a first port of call in a crisis. Providing money advice and holistic support services alongside cash-first responses can help to prevent future hardship. Helping to maintain dignity by enabling everyone to have choice over how to access the food and other essentials needed.

Scottish Government Cash First Pilot areas

- Aberdeen
- Aberdeenshire
- Edinburgh
- Fife
- Glasgow
- North Lanarkshire
- Orkney
- West Dumbartonshire

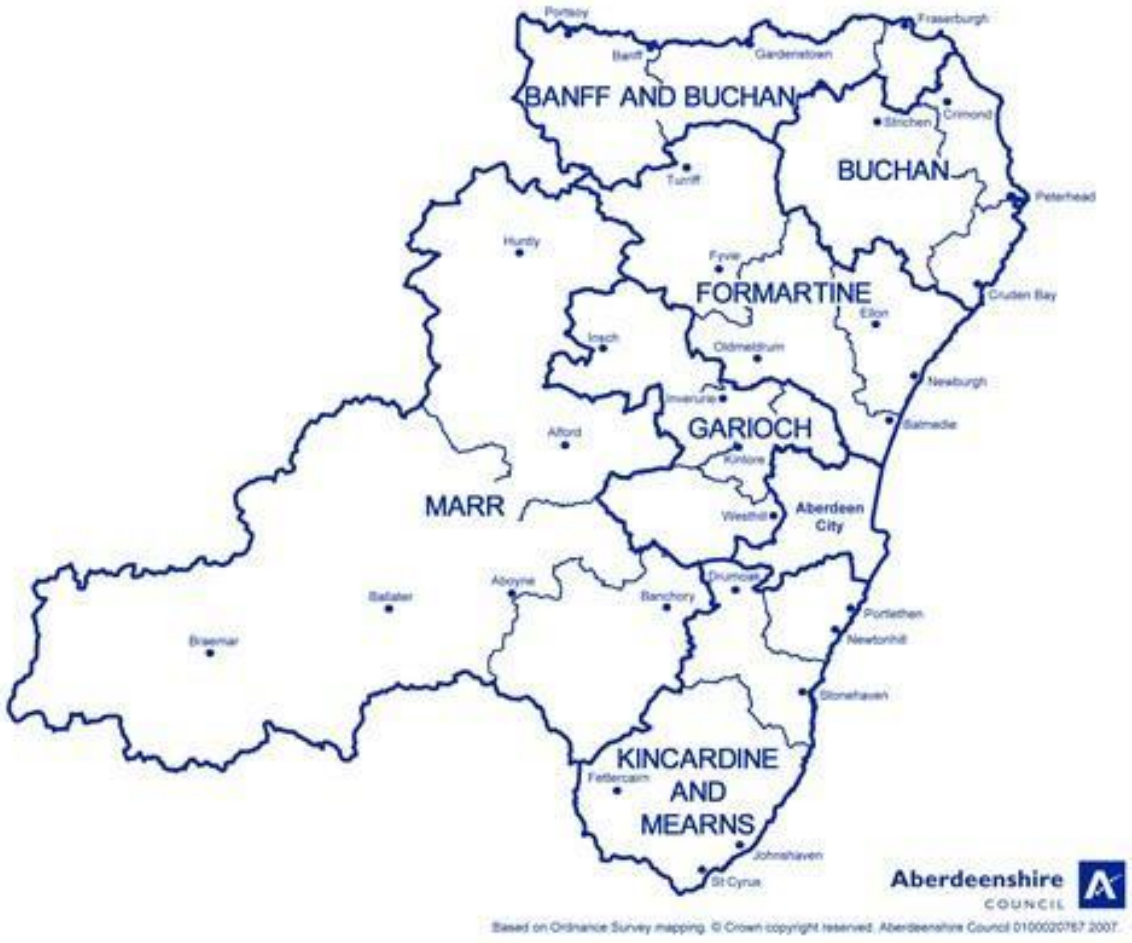


Cash First Aberdeenshire

- Two-year funded project to promote & improve existing services, review referral pathways and use lived experience to look at new initiatives.
- Funding for this initiative finished in February 2026.
- Generated evidence that was shared to inform future policy and practice.
- Built and reviewed the work already being delivered using a Cash First Approach
- Ensured financial assistance and money advice was provided alongside holistic support services to help reduce the need for emergency food.



Service delivery in a rural area



Aberdeenshire's approach

In Aberdeenshire our approach to tackling poverty focusses on early intervention and prevention.

Tackling the root causes of poverty and building people's capabilities through income maximisation, employability and promoting positive life chances.

A partnership approach is vital in ensuring opportunities and services are accessible and relevant.

What we agreed to do.

- Improve existing support , ensure IFAN leaflets are being used.
- Improve cash-first referral pathways between services through reviewing processes.
- Improved collaboration between services.
- Improved accessibility of cash-first through raising awareness, training and using trusted partners to reach those least heard.
- Improved administration of cash-first e.g. through faster decision-making, different payment platforms / digital cards.
- Increase new cash-first pathways for services with a high rate of food bank referrals, for example work with the housing sector, criminal justice and NHS.
- Ensured wrap around support is in place and cash grants are issued by services at a first point of contact for people experiencing crisis.
- Dignity, choice and respect is at the forefront of all aspects of service delivery.



Who benefited from the project.

•Those with additional challenges due to rising costs, transport and access to services.

•Priority families especially from the rural/remote communities.

•Households at risk of homelessness across all tenures.

•Clients through the Resettlement Team to ensure wrap around services are in place for those who have no recourse to public funds.

•Those who have additional barriers in accessing services and support such as Gypsy / Travellers , LGBT+ and those who are least heard.



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Key Achievements - Reach & Financial Impact

- 5,871 low-income households supported
- Reaching over 9000 people.
- £1.02 million total financial gain
- Average household gain: £174.53
- 2,169 Love Local cards issued, supporting choice and dignity
- Significant reach across rural households and priority family groups
- Improved Access to Support
- Reduced Crisis & Food Bank Reliance

Strong Partnership & Workforce Development

- **48** training sessions delivered across sectors
- **32,000** “Worried About Money” leaflets distributed
- Strengthened networks across health, housing, education and third sector
- Shared learning at national conferences

Partnership approach

- A strong partnership approach ensured that services were accessible and relevant for all communities
- Partners have adopted a Cash First Approach -

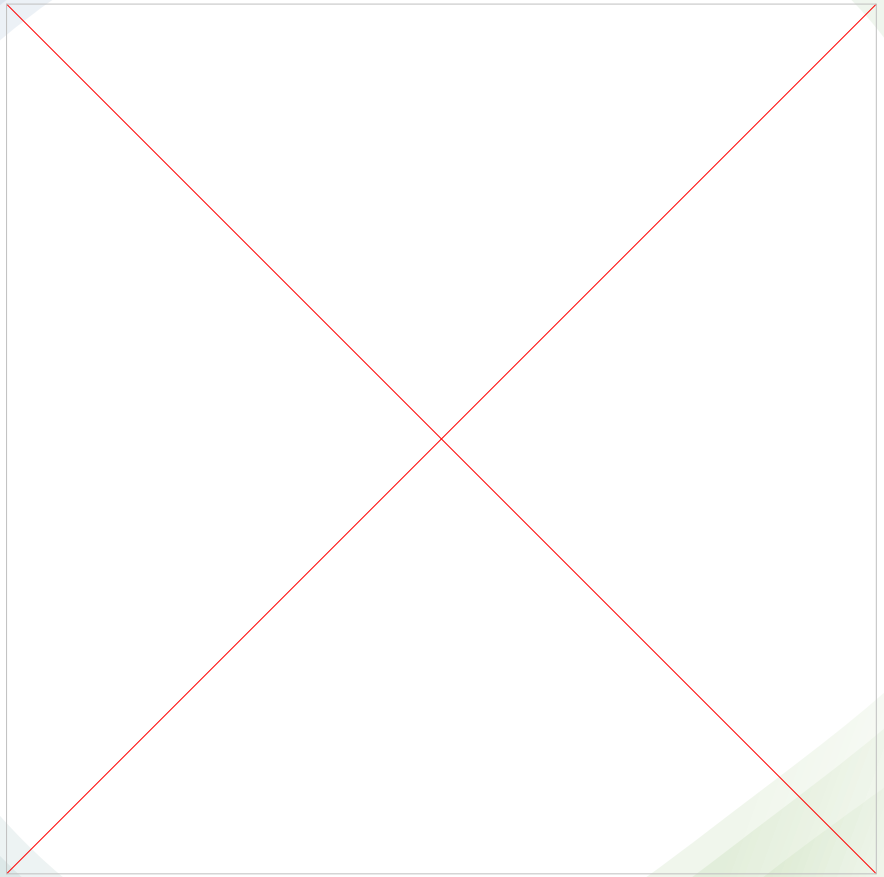
Worrying about Money leaflets

Love Local Cards

Wellbeing Funds & Flexible funds

Winter Challenge fund 2024 and 2025

- Experience of co-production with local voices, recruited lived experience panel.
- Dedicated Cash First Lived Experience panel.



Cash First Lived Experience panel

- 10 Individuals who live in Aberdeenshire across the six administration areas.
- lone parents, families with more than 3 children, households with a disability, households which are rural
- Meet monthly
- Promote and improve existing services
- Review referral pathways
- Test of change project

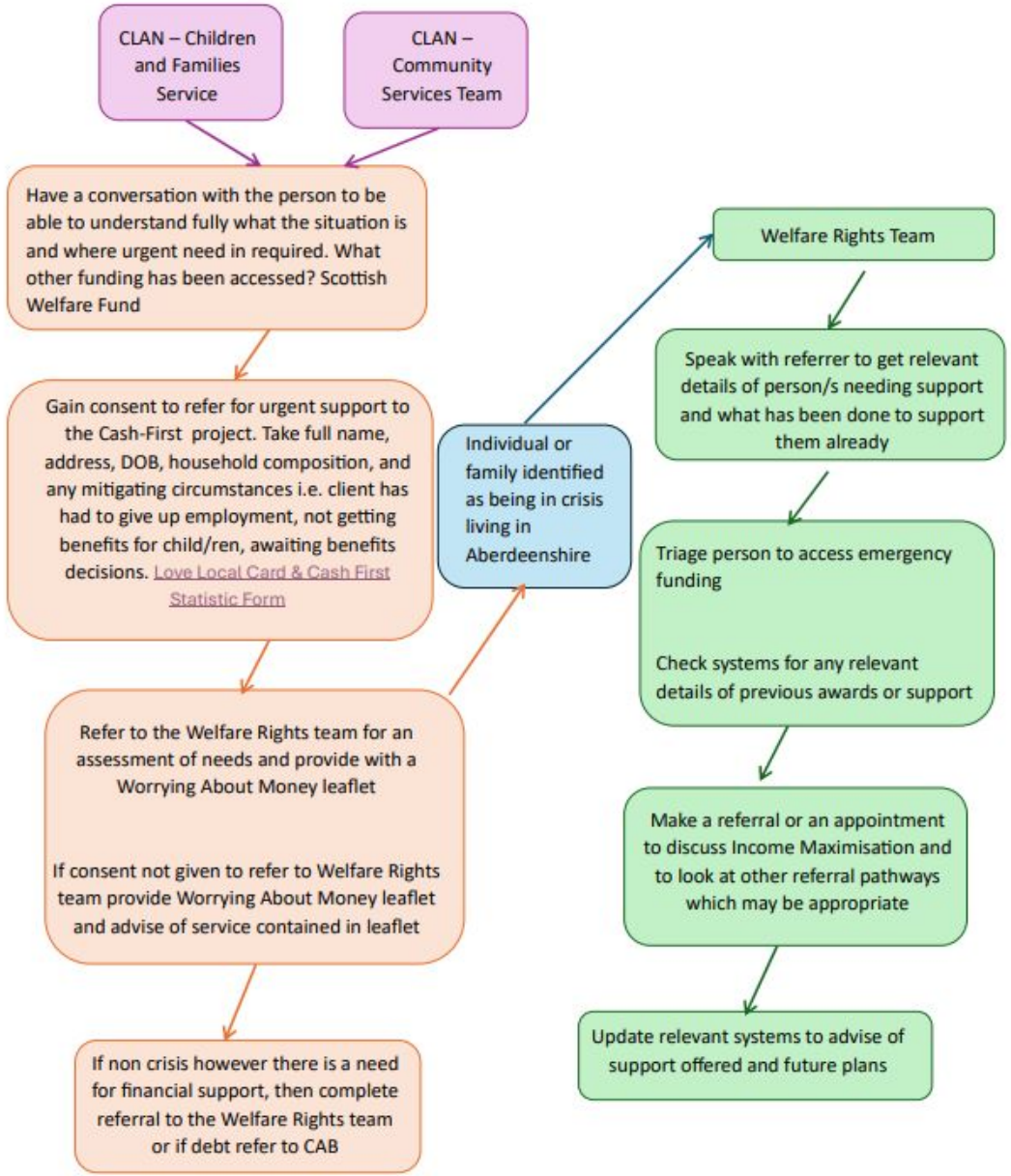
Pathways using trusted partners

- Infant Food Security with NHS Grampian
- Drug and Alcohol Dependency Team
- Kinship Care Team
- Foodbanks / community food projects

- Designed with partners and those with lived experience.
- Increases access to support for those who face a range of barriers.
- Designed to provide ongoing help and support.
- Uses a Cash First Approach for sustained outcomes



CLAN Cancer Support Specialist Pathway



Process – Integrated approach

Client Identified through Step In staff & partners

Have a conversation around financial issues , identify the challenges and asses the type of support required – welfare rights, reduce fuel or food poverty etc.

Discuss the referral to the money advice & welfare rights team. Gather consent to share information and carry out a warm handover

Contact the team and set up a review to ensure sustained outcomes

Client identified through money advice & welfare rights team

Have a conversation around financial issues , identify the challenges and asses the contact they have with other services ensuring a person centred approach is taken.

Gain consent to referral to other services including to Step In and share updates with those who are supporting them.

Deliver the service and share progress with those supporting the client

Learnings

- Partnership is the key especially with local people.
- Cash First is not understood – its not just about money or foodbanks.
- Those requiring support have changed – working households, income already maxed to the full, complex cases requiring an integrated service.
- Policies at a local & national level need to be integrated rather than competing.
- Change is built on developing positive relationships which takes time.

Challenges

- Capacity pressures in advice services
- Delays in benefit decisions
- Rural transport and digital exclusion barriers
- Short-term funding limiting sustainability
- Data sharing challenges across partners

Future

- Continue to develop solutions with Local Voices to deliver services in a large rural area.
- Continue to build trusted relationships with partners to ensure we are sharing resources, expertise and skills to achieve positive outcomes for all.
- Review of how Information & Advice Services are delivered across Aberdeenshire.
- Continue to change practice ensuring language is inclusive and services are integrated – tell once, no wrong door, early intervention. Requires change rather than slogans.
- Aberdeenshire Food and information map - Google My Maps

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Questions

