Making the Connections:
A study of emergency food aid in Scotland

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vision is of a sustainable Scotland based on social and
economic justice with dignity for all, where poverty
and inequalities are not tolerated and are challenged.
Our aim is to combat poverty by working with others
to empower individuals and communities to affect
change in the distribution of power and resources.

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Executive Summary

Over recent years the number and range of groups and organisations in Scotland and across the UK providing some form of emergency food aid has grown exponentially to meet demand from increasing numbers of people now living in food poverty. It has been estimated that more than half a million people in the UK are now reliant on emergency food aid (Cooper et al. 2014) and initial mapping work for this study identified 167 groups and organisations in Scotland currently offering some form of food service. However, it has also been widely acknowledged that the provision of emergency food aid alone is not a sustainable response to food poverty. Measures to address the root causes – namely changes to the social security system, punitive sanctioning, low pay, insecure work, and rising food costs - are required (Perry et al 2014; Sosenko & Livingston 2014; Scottish Parliament 2014; Cooper et al 2014).

This report presents findings from a research project commissioned by the Scottish Government carried out between June 2014 and January 2015. The three main objectives of this project were:

• To develop a better understanding of the range of support delivered by emergency food providers;
• To identify better ways for emergency food aid providers to refer their clients to the additional support that they may require;
• To make a contribution to combating the growth of food poverty in Scotland.

A key output of this research has been a web-based resource aimed at assisting those delivering emergency food aid to better link with mainstream services (www.foodaidscotland.org). This includes links to key national support and advice agencies, information about relevant campaigns and research, case studies, and good practice guidance. While there are clear limitations on the scope and scale of a short-term research project such as this, the intention is that the knowledge gathered and the online resource produced will contribute to efforts to combat the growth of food poverty in Scotland.

The baseline for the types of emergency food aid included in this study was taken from the 2013 report 'Overview of Food Aid Provision in Scotland' (Sosenko et al 2013) which focused on provision of food parcels (typically packages of non-perishable food to sustain someone for 3 days) and provision of meals (community venues offering free or low-cost meals such as community cafes and churches). Whilst recognising the challenges of mapping a service which is often provided very informally and which is also growing very rapidly, it is believed that at

the time it was conducted, this study included all services recognised in Scotland as offering some form of free food – ranging from informal community café drop-ins to the more structured Trussell Trust Foodbank franchises. The report characterises the different forms of emergency food aid as: food parcels; soup kitchens: and community cafes. Free school meals, meals on wheels, and free meals served in residential recovery and care services were excluded from the study.

The study covered the whole of Scotland and involved; an online survey of 81 emergency food aid providers; an online survey of 24 Citizens Advice Bureaux; a series of 4 focus groups with a total of 43 providers and other key stakeholders; and one to one interviews with 14 recipients of emergency food aid.

Key Findings

Emergency food aid provision in Scotland

This study suggests some key features of the geographic spread of providers and the types of organisations offering the service which build on findings of previous mapping studies. 35% of survey respondents operate a Trussell Trust franchise foodbank. While the Trussell Trust is the best known provider of emergency food aid in Scotland, the landscape of providers – particularly in cities, is very diverse. 82% of those operating in large urban areas are not Trussell Trust providers, compared to a more even split between Trussell and non-Trussell provision in rural and semi-rural areas. In addition, respondents in rural areas and remote small towns are more likely than those in large urban areas to consider emergency food aid provision to be the core purpose of their organisation (60% in the former compared with 37% in the later). Religious organisations are the most common providers of emergency food aid (followed by groups which identified as having a community development purpose) and the majority of Trussell Trust foodbanks are run by church groups. Respondents also included five housing and housing support services, all of which operate in large or other urban areas.

Non-perishable food parcels are the most common form of emergency food aid provision. 80% of those operating in rural areas also provide food parcel delivery, taking food parcels directly to recipients' homes, compared with only 12% in large urban areas. In terms of other food-related activities, 31% of survey respondents deliver cooking classes, 17% have community growing projects and 14% run food coops/community shops alongside their emergency food aid provision. In rural areas, emergency

food aid provision is generally newer and provided by groups set up especially to provide this service. In large urban areas it is provided by a wider range of community and voluntary organisations which tend to have higher numbers of paid staff. 41% of survey respondents have no paid members of staff. 40% have 1-10 volunteers, while 24% have more than 30.

The role of emergency food aid provision

The study found there is significant ambivalence among providers as to the role and expectations of their services. Many providers have a sense of responsibility to those who have donated food. This has an impact on how potential clients are judged and who is considered deserving of emergency food aid. Providers often refuse to give to people with obvious drug or alcohol addictions. This raises concern about how such individuals experiencing crisis are able to access support.

There is a clear tension between the desire to respond to the immediate needs of those in crisis, and recognition that the solutions to food poverty, and the responsibility for those solutions, do not lie with emergency food aid providers. Many providers hold strong views about the role of emergency food aid, suggesting that government is failing in its responsibility to support the most vulnerable, and that charitable provision of food should not continue to become an established part of the welfare system.

The client's experience

Participants who took part in the study suggest a range of factors which lead people to access their services: hunger and desperation were identified most commonly by providers as the reasons for people turning to emergency food aid services, while fear, pride and shame are considered significant barriers to making that initial step. Consistent with evidence from other recent reports (Cooper et al. 2014; Perry et al. 2014), sudden loss of income through benefit sanctions or delays was the predominant reason why the clients interviewed were using food banks.

Loneliness and isolation were also identified as significant issues for many clients – particularly those accessing soup kitchens and community cafes. Providing a welcoming, supportive, non-judgemental, client-centred environment is seen as important among clients and providers alike. Emergency food aid providers which are able to engage people in this way have the potential to help reduce social isolation and restore a sense of self-worth among clients. Providers generally recognise that people accessing their services will often have complex needs, which the client themselves may struggle to articulate. This poses significant challenges for providers in being able to adequately engage and support clients to access the services they may require.

Referral policies

All Trussell Trust and a significant proportion of non-Trussell Trust providers operate a referral policy whereby, in order to receive food, a client must be referred by an external agency (often a social worker, GP or housing officer). This study suggests providers experience both advantages and challenges in operating on a referral-only basis. The referrals system plays an important role in shaping how providers interact with mainstream services.

A key advantage of a referral-only model is that it is considered easier for volunteers to manage. The responsibility for assessing a client's wider needs and the 'legitimacy' of an individual case lies with the referral agency and therefore volunteers are not required to have the skills or knowledge to engage clients on wider issues. Emergency food aid providers involved in the study identified a number of challenges in operating referrals from mainstream statutory and voluntary organisations to their services. Such challenges appear to be symptomatic of the dilemmas many agencies face in negotiating the on-going changes and reductions in social security provisions, and the increasing role of faith and voluntary groups in supporting the most vulnerable. While operating a referrals policy may reassure providers that a client's wider needs are being dealt with by an appropriate service, there is concern that referral does not necessarily give a full or accurate picture of an individual's circumstances, and therefore that they may not be receiving the support they require. In addition, providers often feel that agencies "off-load" clients and do not necessarily exhaust all other avenues of support before making a referral.

Finally, staff and volunteers face a moral dilemma of how to handle self-referrals when operating a referral-only model, often developing complicated 'retrospective referrals' so as not to turn someone away.

Providing more than food

The study found there to be broad recognition among emergency food aid providers of the need and desire to offer more than what one called "a calorific exchange". The most common 'additional service' is emotional support, provided by 70% of survey respondents. This is most likely to be an informal, 'listening ear' as opposed to specialist counselling or mentoring.

Having trained advisors (such as Citizens Advice or welfare rights) available at the emergency food aid service is considered an effective model in engaging people with external agencies and the support they need. Uptake is more likely than if clients are sign-posted elsewhere for advice. Informal advocacy support, such as telephoning external agencies on behalf of or alongside clients, is commonly provided by staff or volunteers.

Provision of such support is likely to be adhoc and will vary depending on time available, and on the knowledge and skill of particular staff or volunteers.

Seventy six percent of providers involved in the survey are able refer clients who may require it to welfare and financial/debt advice services. Close connections with energy advice, employment services and women's aid are less common. A lack of resources is the most common barrier to providing more than food, followed by a lack of volunteer training. Emergency food aid providers struggle to have access to up-to-date, comprehensive information about the most appropriate, locally available support for their clients. Building relationships with named individuals within partner agencies is crucial for helping break down barriers to engagement for clients. 46% of providers would like better connections with external agencies, specifically Citizens Advice/benefits advice services and also substance misuse support services.

Ensuring sufficient training, information, and buy-in from staff and volunteers to effectively connect clients to appropriate agencies for support around a complex range of issues is a significant challenge. The findings suggest clients are more likely to be willing to engage with additional support after several visits to an emergency food aid service, once a relationship of trust has been built up.

Partnership working

Almost half of providers are involved in partnerships with other emergency food aid services locally. Sharing and redistributing food is the most important role of these partnerships. This is particularly the case for members of the Trussell Trust network who can take part in national food collection days at partner supermarkets. Forty-two percent felt there are particular barriers to effective partnership working – specifically, differences in values and beliefs about the purpose and most appropriate model of emergency food aid provision. Differences of opinion regarding a referral-only system appeared a particular source of tension between different providers.

Opportunities to network, share experiences and best practice between providers were considered important. The study also suggests that there is appetite among emergency food aid providers to develop partnership working for collective advocacy and campaigning on issues of food poverty. Almost half of providers are involved in some form of more strategic partnership working with other agencies around tackling food poverty/ hardship. The findings suggest that the advantages of partnership working for emergency food aid providers include access to information and expertise, as well as opportunities to develop a more integrated response.

Research Conclusions and Recommendations

Looking at examples of research from countries such as Canada (where emergency food aid is a longer established part of the welfare state), and from evidence presented in this and other recent UK studies, there is a real danger that emergency food aid provision may become a permanent feature of the welfare landscape in Scotland. Soup kitchen type services, largely targeted at people experiencing homelessness and provided by churches and other voluntary groups, may have long been an established feature of social support in Scotland. However, it is the recent growth in food banks and the extension of emergency food aid to a wide range of social security recipients and people in work which is of acute concern. This study has shown that emergency food aid providers themselves feel particular ambivalence about their work and frustration at what they often see as the state passing responsibility for supporting the most vulnerable onto churches and charities. There is appetite among providers in Scotland to develop a more critical voice and to challenge the root causes of food poverty. Partnership working between emergency food aid providers offers the potential for collective advocacy and campaigning on issues of food poverty.

A preventative approach to food poverty which focuses on decent incomes, access to affordable, nutritious food, and which prioritises the most vulnerable, is required. Ultimately, it is action to increase state benefits, end the punitive sanctions regime, address in-work poverty, raise the minimum wage and promote the living wage, which will have the biggest impact on stemming the growth of food poverty in Scotland. However, in the short term it is important to focus on how emergency food aid can be best used to connect clients to more mainstream forms of support, and also build resistance to the further entrenchment of such provision within the welfare state in Scotland. To move towards achieving this, the following recommendations are proposed:

At a national level:

• The Scottish Government should take a strong policy position against the further institutionalisation of emergency food aid within mainstream welfare provision and send clear messages to the UK Government that revision of their current austerity and welfare reform agenda is required in order to reverse this trend. It is crucial that any state investment in emergency food aid is focused on ensuring clients do not become dependent on this service, but have improved access to mainstream sources of support.

• Scottish Government and other funding bodies should extend their investment in supporting the provision of specialist advisors such as Citizens Advice or welfare rights advice advisors, within emergency food aid services

(particularly within food banks as their clients are com monly affected by benefits delays and sanctions).

• The important role played by soup kitchen type services should be recognised in social justice policy, not only in providing food, but also in reducing social isolation among some of Scotland's most vulnerable citizens.

• The various roles played by the range of community café and other community food activities in reducing isolation and improving health and wellbeing should also be recognised in social justice policy. Support for emergency food aid provision in these contexts should not detract from their wider community development purposes.

• Scottish Government investment in existing local infrastructures – such as the Third Sector Interfaces should reflect the need to improve the availability of up-to-date information on the range of both statutory and voluntary services. This would improve emergency food aid providers' knowledge of, and ability to connect with, other services at a local level.

• Creating opportunities at both a national and local level for emergency food aid providers to network and share experiences offers the potential for the development of collective advocacy and campaigning on food poverty, and also for identifying longer-term solutions. Such events could also help connect these groups and organisations with wider anti-poverty work and campaigns.

At a local level:

• Local government and third sector infrastructures should support opportunities for networking and information sharing at a local level between emergency food aid providers and mainstream services. This would help improve collaborative working to address food, and wider poverty issues, as well as ensuring that clients receive a holistic service and are effectively connected into existing support available to them.

• Councils should ensure that all emergency food aid providers have information on how the Scottish Welfare Fund operates in their area.

• Investment from local government is also required to support the colocation of services and increase the availability of specialist advisors within emergency food aid services.

• Local anti-poverty and financial inclusion strategies should include food poverty as a priority issue and those involved in delivering and receiving emergency

food aid should be included in the development and implementation of such strategies.

At an organisational level:

• Models of emergency food aid provision which are client-centred and focused on providing non-judgemental and holistic support should be encouraged as best practice.

• It is important that emergency food aid providers are able to prioritise creating opportunities for reducing social isolation, building community relationships, and empowering individuals to access the services and support they are entitled to.

• Providing staff and volunteers of emergency food aid services with basic training in poverty awareness, welfare rights, and substance misuse issues in particular should be encouraged as best practice. However this should not be at the expense of investment in specialist advice as described above.

• Advocacy and mentoring training, as well as funding to provide resources such as telephones for use by or on behalf of clients attending the emergency food aid service, would help staff/volunteers to better provide such support, and to connect clients to the services and support they require.

• Emergency food aid providers should aim to work together at a local and national level to identify good practice, and importantly to focus attention on the structural drivers of food poverty and look to develop a more sustainable response.

1. Background and Methodology

1.1 Research Rationale

This research project was commissioned by the Scottish Government with the aim of better understanding the types of services and support currently offered by emergency food aid providers in Scotland, and to identify ways in which they might better connect clients to mainstream services which they may require. The project follows recent studies which have sought to map the emergency food aid landscape in Scotland, and also those which have developed the evidence base of the drivers of the rapid growth in this area across the UK (notably Sosenko et al.'s 2013 mapping study and publications by Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam in 2013 and 2014). There has also been much attention paid to examining the link between the rise of food banks and the UK government's current welfare changes. According to data from the Trussell Trust (2014) (the franchise network of foodbanks and largest provider of emergency food aid in the UK) the primary cause for referrals to their foodbanks for 2013/14 was benefit delays, followed by low income and benefit changes. The new sanctions regime in particular, that can leave people with a complete absence of income, is reported as a significant factor in the rise in food bank use across the UK and in Scotland (Cooper et al, 2014; Dryburgh, 2014; Sosenko et al, 2013).

Although not necessarily representative of the demand and drivers of other types of emergency food aid, Trussell Trust data is the most rigorous source of data on food bank usage in Scotland and has been found to be a good indicator of general trends experienced by other providers of food parcels (Sosenko et al, 2013). While the DWP maintains that it is an increase in supply which is driving such growth, this position has been widely discredited. A Defra commissioned report states: *"there is no systematic evidence on the impact of increased supply and hypotheses of its potential effects are not based on robust evidence"* (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, p.12). The Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee also stated that it is 'convinced by the volume and strength of the evidence that there is a direct correlation between welfare reform and the increase in use of food banks' (Scottish Parliament, 2014a).

While the number of emergency food aid providers in Scotland and across the UK has continued to grow, it has been widely acknowledged that the provision of emergency food aid alone is not a sustainable response to food poverty and that measures to address the root causes are required (Sosenko & Livingston 2014; Scottish Parliament 2014; Cooper et al 2014). As highlighted by research from the USA and Canada, where food banks

are longer-established in the welfare landscape, such short-term interventions to meet immediate food needs are likely to have limited impact on addressing household food insecurity beyond providing immediate relief from hunger (Riches 2002; Poppendieck 1998). UK studies have reached similar conclusions (Lambie-Mumford et al, 2014). In addition, as large scale provision of food aid becomes socially accepted as an appropriate response, there is a danger that the issue of food poverty becomes depoliticised and the social and economic drivers of food poverty ignored (Tarasuk, 2001). It is important to consider these warnings in light of the recently published report by the UK Government's All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom (Forsey, 2014), whose primary proposal in responding to the issue is the creation of a new charitable system – the '*Feeding Britain Network*' – focused on the redistribution of food waste. A number of reports on the rise of emergency food aid in the UK (Scottish Parliament, 2014b; SPICe, 2014; Lambie-Mumford, et al 2014) reference Canadian academic Graham Riches who cautions:

"The rise of food banks in Canada is concrete evidence both of the breakdown of the social safety net and the commodification of social assistance… They enable governments to look the other way and neglect food poverty and nutritional health and wellbeing. In countries where they are in their infancy, the question of whether to support their development should be a matter of urgent public debate" (2002, p.650).

All the same, it is also acknowledged that non-governmental, community-based emergency food aid providers are well placed to campaign for change and give a voice to those experiencing food poverty (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). This potential was highlighted by workshop participants in the study for Defra who discussed how providers might work together to achieve a collective voice and common approach to lobbying for change (Lambie-Mumford, et al 2014).

Certainly the Trussell Trust's systematic monitoring and data gathering has been crucial in evidencing the link between welfare reform and food bank usage, and this has informed high profile reports produced alongside Oxfam and Church Action on Poverty that call on government to address the root causes of food poverty. It is significant that a number of church leaders, whose congregations provide the majority of informal food aid across the country, have been particularly outspoken on the issue, criticising the government for failing to ensure that the welfare system can protect people from hunger (Daily Mirror, 2014).

There is a clear challenge for the community and voluntary organisations providing emergency food aid to balance the need to raise awareness of the underlying issues with the importance of feeding those facing immediate hardship. In considering what a more effective, sustainable response to food poverty might look like, it has been recognised that a model of food aid provision which has good connections with other services and is able to refer clients to other support they are entitled to might help move people on from situations which have lead them to food banks (Dryburgh, 2014). The Scottish Parliament's Welfare Reform Committee believes food aid providers should work together to address need where possible and calls on the Scottish Government to encourage effective partnership working (Scottish Parliament, 2014). The Big Lottery Fund in Scotland's Support and Connect programme, currently funding projects aimed at enabling organisations helping those in hardship to be better connected to each other so they can offer more effective support, has also promoted the development of such partnerships. In their evidence submission to the All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty in Britain, Sosenko and Livingstone highlight the importance of such inter-agency connections:*"There is a definite recognition that the food aid services are limited in their capacity to provide additional benefits, but that ideally these should be accessible through other support networks. However, to our knowledge such networks in Scotland remain in their infancy."* (2014, p.10)

At a UK level, the Defra commissioned study also identified the need for better networks and partnership working between food aid providers and with other services. The study called for more research in this area:

"There is little systematic research on how interconnectedness between food aid provision and other service providers is being, or might be, generated and sustained, and what the key factors which support such coordination might be, at national and local levels. Such research would need to address both the large scale, national food aid providers, and smaller, more localised and independent types of provision. It would also need to include different types of food aid provision, not just that which is through food banks"(Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, p.72).

Therefore there appears to be a significant gap in our understanding of the range of support offered by emergency food aid providers in Scotland, how they are connecting with each other, and what links they have with other services which can support people facing food poverty. There is also a need to consider how partnerships and networks around food aid provision develop, and what the advantages, disadvantages, and challenges of such models might be.

1.2 Objectives

This research project then sits within the context of current research, policy and political interests and priorities outlined above. The three main objectives of this project are:
- To develop a better understanding of the range of support delivered by emergency food providers;
- To identify better ways for emergency food aid providers to refer their clients to the additional support that they may require;
- To make a contribution to combating the growth of food poverty in Scotland.

A key output of this research has been a website, providing information and links, aimed at assisting those delivering emergency food aid to better link with mainstream services (www.foodaidscotland.org). While there are clear limitations on the scope and scale of a short-term research project such as this, the intension is that the knowledge gathered and the materials produced will contribute to efforts to combat the growth of food poverty in Scotland.

1.3 Methodology

Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this research project. These included:
- Initial scoping fieldwork, visits to emergency food projects, and meetings with key stakeholders in Glasgow and across the Highlands
- An online survey of 81 emergency food aid providers across Scotland
- An online survey of 24 Citizens Advice Bureaux across Scotland
- Four focus groups in South Lanarkshire and Aberdeen with a total of 43 emergency food aid providers and other key voluntary and statutory sector stakeholders
- One to one interviews with 14 recipients of emergency food aid in Glasgow and Kilmarnock.

A more detailed description of the research methods used can be found at Appendix 1. Appendix 2 profiles the organisations providing emergency food aid which were visited for client interviews.

1.4 Data Analysis

The focus groups and one to one interviews were transcribed and coded for emergent themes. A framework of themes and subthemes was developed and refined through close reading of the data. The open text responses in the online survey were also analysed using these qualitative methods. The quantitative data from the survey was analysed using Survey Monkey's inbuilt statistical summarising and cross-tabulation software, as well as Microsoft Excel. The quantitative and qualitative findings are presented together thematically to give a comprehensive view on the practices and perspectives of those involved in emergency food aid provision Scotland.

2. Emergency Food Ais Providers in Scotland: Where who what and who

The research findings suggest some key features of the geographic spread of providers and the types of organisations offering the service which build on findings of previous mapping studies. The survey asked respondents about where they operate, the type of emergency food aid they provide (as well as other food related services offered), and also about the type and size of their organisation.

2.1 Location

Thirty of the 32 Local Authority Areas in Scotland are represented in the survey results. A breakdown of respondents by area is at Appendix 3. Figure 1 below shows the location of survey respondents using the Scottish Government's six-fold Urban Rural Classification. More than half of all respondents operate in large urban or other urban areas.

Twenty-eight of the 80 total survey respondents (35%) are members of the Trussell Trust network. In considering the geographic spread of different models of emergency food aid provision, 82% of those which reported operating in urban areas are non-Trussell Trust providers. This compares with rural and semi-rural areas where the responses suggest a more even 50:50 split between Trussell and non-Trussell provision. This information is represented in Figure 2 below. These results build on the findings of Sosenko et al.'s (2013) mapping study which found there to be a more diverse landscape of providers in Glasgow than other parts of the country.

Figure 2

Diversity of providers by geographic settings

Source: Survey Data, August 2014

Figure 1

Emergency Food Aid Providers in Scotland: the areas they serve
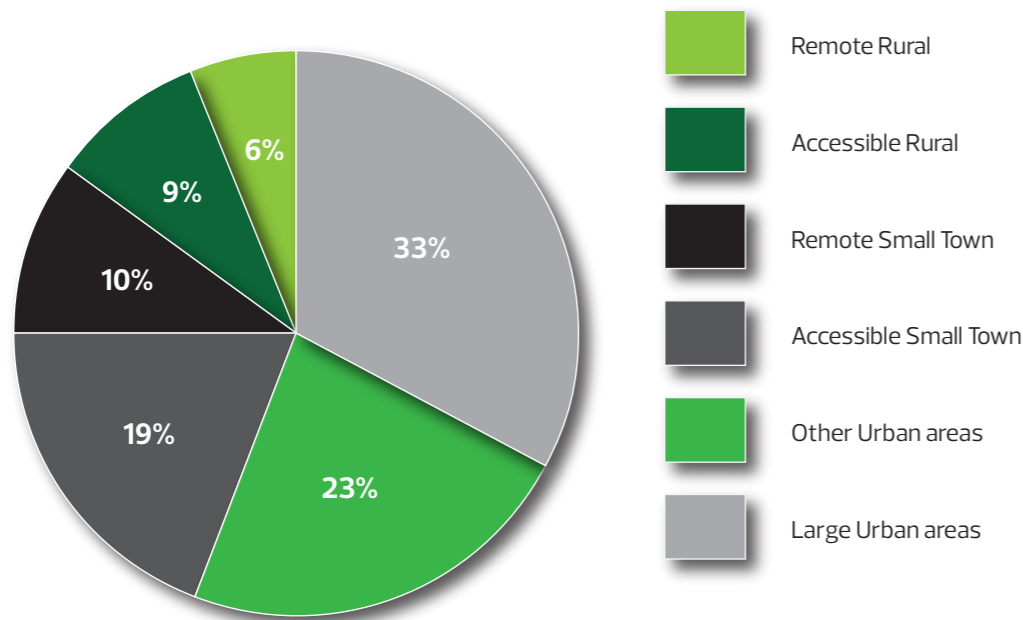
Number: 80
Source: Survey data, August 2014
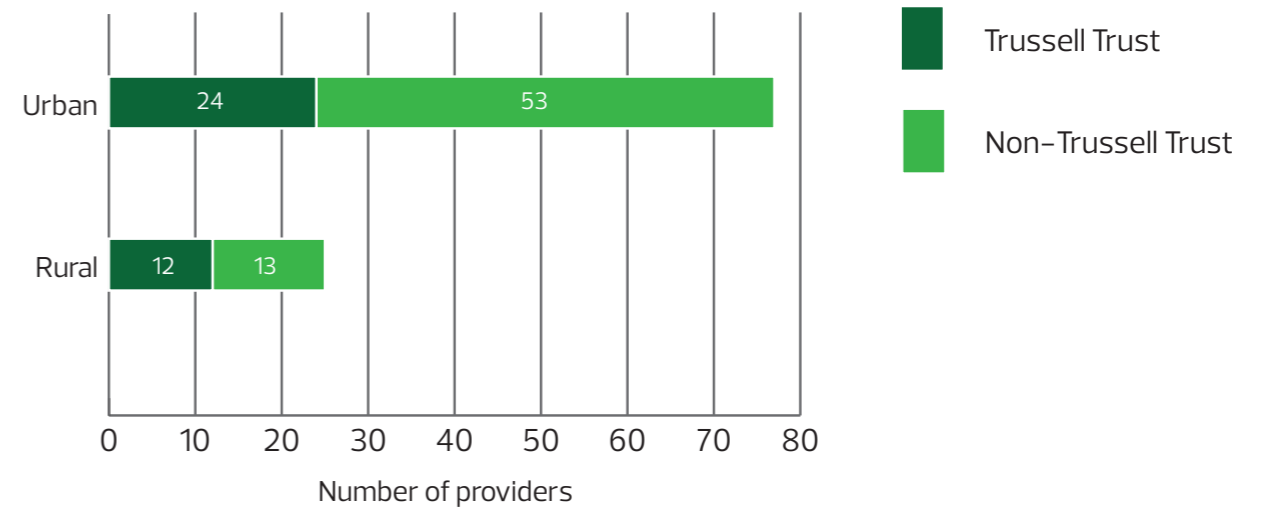
2.2 Type of food aid provided

The most common form of emergency food aid provided by respondents to this survey is non-perishable food parcels which are provided by 84% of respondents. Of these 27% also provide perishable/fresh food. 22 of the 80 respondents provide hot food on site. 2 offer a 'soup van' type service providing hot food off site. 80% of those operating in remote or accessible rural areas provide food parcel delivery, compared with 12% of those working in large urban areas.

80% of those operating in remote or accessible rural areas provide food parcel delivery, compared with 12% of those working in large urban areas.

When asked about food-related activities offered in addition to emergency food aid, 31% of respondents said they deliver cooking classes, and 17% have community growing/gardening projects. 10% run food coops alongside the provision of emergency food aid, while 3 others mentioned similar community shop-type initiatives as part of their activities. One respondent stated that they provide vouchers to a food coop in their food parcels, and two others said that they give vouchers for the purchase of fresh produce. One respondent commented that they provide clients with a choice of fresh and perishable produce as opposed to a pre-prepared food parcel.

31% of respondents said they deliver cooking classes
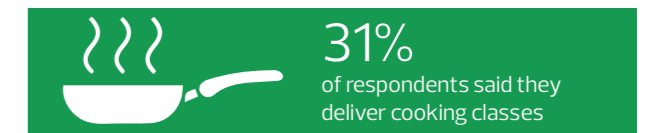
Providing choice was highlighted by this respondent as particularly important for the dignity of the client.

The following typology summarises the types of food aid provided in Scotland:

Type of food aid	
Food Parcels	Packages of perishable and/or fresh food. Commonly contain three-days' worth of food. Providers may be Trussell Trust members or follow their own independent system of planning, packing and administering parcels.
Soup kitchen	Term used to describe places serving hot or cold meals at no or low-cost. Commonly targeted at homeless clients.
Community café	Term used to describe services providing free or low-cost food in a community setting, often focused on healthy eating – clients may or may not be experiencing food poverty.

2.3 Focus and size of organisations

The survey results suggest that a wide range of organisations are involved in providing emergency food aid.

Respondents in rural areas and remote small towns are more likely than those in large urban areas to consider emergency food aid provision to be the core purpose of their organisation (60% in the former compared with 37% in the later). By far the most common providers are religious organisations, followed by organisations which identified as having a community development purpose. Respondents also included 5 housing and housing support services, all of which operate in large or other urban areas. Forty-one percent of the emergency food aid providers which responded to the survey have no paid members of staff.

Nine respondents have three or more staff members working on emergency food aid provision and associated activities; however the majority of these are not primarily emergency food aid providers but offer this as part of a wider range of services such as housing support agencies. 40% of respondents have between 1 and 10 volunteers involved in emergency food aid provision and associated activities, while 24% have more than 30.

Thirty-two percent of respondents have been providing emergency food aid for between 12 and 24 months and 30% for more than 5 years. From this the organisations which consider their primary purpose to be the provision of emergency food aid are slightly younger, with 45% operating this service for between 12 and 24 months, and 30% between 6 and 12 months.

The following typology summarises key findings from the research on the types of organisations providing emergency food aid in Scotland:

Type of organisation	
Faith group	Most commonly churches or other Christian organisations. Predominantly volunteer-run.
Independent food aid Provider	Independent charity/group with core purpose of providing emergency food aid
Community food/health projects	Organisations running a range of food and health related activities which also provide emergency food aid. Often focused on healthy eating and food growing and cooking skills. Activities may include food coops, community growing and community cafés. Usually have at least one paid member of staff.
Other voluntary organisations	A range of organisations providing community services and activities not necessarily focused on food, such as youth work, advice services adult learning and employability training.
Housing services	Housing associations/housing support services which have set up some form of emergency food aid provision for tenants.

The research also looked to understand the types of non-food services offered by emergency food aid providers.

This typology summarises the findings in this area which are explored in more detail in the rest of the report:

Type of Non-Food Services Provided	
External advice service onsite	External, professional advisors – commonly Citizens Advice Bureaux or welfare rights – available at food aid service to speak to clients. Generally once a week or on a temporary basis. Also includes delivery of one-off information and training sessions (welfare, financial and energy advice sessions appear most common).
Formal referrals to partner agencies	Where client is interviewed and assessed as requiring support from a partner agency (for example welfare/financial advice service). Such formal, systematic processes and partnerships were not common but in development in some areas.
Informal advocacy support	Staff/volunteers (who may or may not be trained) support clients to engage with external agencies such as making phone calls to DWP or housing services on their behalf. Generally provided on an informal, ad-hoc basis and dependent on skills and knowledge of individual volunteer.
Ad-hoc signposting to other services	Staff/volunteers raise awareness of other local services through informal conversation or via leaflets available/displayed at the food aid service.
Informal emotional support	Staff/volunteers are generally welcoming, make themselves available to provide a 'listening ear'.
Links into organisation's other services	Clients accessing an organisation for food aid become engaged with other services/actives which may or may not be food-related such as food co-ops, cooking classes, other training/learning, community groups
Volunteering opportunities	Similar to above – clients accessing food aid become involved in other activities an organisation may provide and then take on volunteering roles which or may not be within the food aid service itself.

3. The role of emergency food aid

Staff and volunteer attitudes towards their clients and their views on the role of emergency food aid in Scotland came through strongly in the research data. Reflecting much of recent media and political discourse on the subject, the research suggests a level of discomfort (in many cases anger) at the existence of food banks in 2014 Scotland among both those providing, and those receiving such services. Many providers felt very conflicted about the work they do. It is interesting to note the sense of responsibility which many felt towards the people who had donated food to them. As an Edinburgh food bank manager put it: *"I'm a good steward of the food which people in the community have given me to hand out and you have the duty to take that responsibility so I can't be seen to be giving to people who are not buying what they should be buying."* A church-based food bank volunteer in Aberdeen also commented, *"People are genuinely giving us money and food for people who are in need so we have to be responsible with that."* This sense of responsibility seemed to be connected with fears which were expressed about being taken advantage of, particularly regarding people with addictions; as a volunteer at a food bank in a church in Aberdeenshire stated, *"We have started off as an emergency food bank for people with drug and alcohol problems, and they will fleece you, all the time".*

A number of participants spoke about people with addictions selling on food parcels and several were clearly anxious about, as they saw it, being taken advantage of in this way: *"the small minority of cases, we say sorry you're not getting it, you're clearly going out to sell this to score something"* (manager, food bank in community health project, North East). It was clear that many providers are very wary of giving to people with obvious addictions issues. As a food bank coordinator commented, their services are *"not feeding habits but helping people out of their crisis… if it was a drug issue we'd expect a referral to come from an appropriate referral agency, not just their choice but someone who's going to help them."* This reluctance to give to people with addictions raises some concern about how such individuals experiencing crisis are able to access any sort of support, and perhaps suggests the need for emergency food aid providers to have better connection with drugs and alcohol services and also for some training for staff and volunteers.

Tensions regarding the current and future role of emergency food aid providers and the expectations being placed on staff and volunteers emerged strongly from the data. Many participants identified that emergency food aid itself will not solve food poverty, and may in fact, as the manager of a community health project which provides a food bank in the North East suggested, be part of problem:

> " *Food banks in themselves we do not see as a good thing. They erode dignity, create dependency and bolster welfare reform. They just maintain the status quo, they* Comments ranged from expressions of uneasiness, to frustration, to outrage, at what the existence of services such as food banks means for the future of welfare and the changing role of the state in supporting the most vulnerable. "
> (food bank manager, North East)

As one participant commented:

> " *Charities and churches are doing the government's work and they're opting out. We're getting to the stage where people that's no got are being sent to a food bank, rather than being given a proper income.* "
> (food bank and soup kitchen manager, Glasgow)

This feeling was echoed in responses to the survey of CABx, as one stated: *"Foodbanks can be a helpful shot-term solution for many but systems should be improved to help minimise the need for this kind of help."* A food bank volunteer in Glasgow referred to the need to tackle fundamental issues such as in-work poverty: *"I think what's important as well in terms of routes out of poverty is people getting a living wage, it's not just benefits sanctions, it is people on low income, low-paid jobs."* The issue of in-work poverty was also highlighted by two emergency food aid clients interviewed at a soup kitchen in Glasgow, one of whom stated: *"I mean people are working and still live in poverty, and they say the way out of poverty is through work – who's kidding who?"* The second, referring to several years of his own experience of homelessness services, expressed concerns at the recent growth of food banks, *"Times wherenae as bad… back then there was maybe food banks but there wasnae as many, there's just foodbanks everywhere now, and I'm hearing that people that are working are even having to access foodbanks, it's no right is it no."*

The coordinator of a peer mentoring project in Glasgow also questioned the motivation to develop the services provided by food banks: *"How good do you want to make your service? Do you want the food bank to represent a flexible Rolls-Royce model, always able to support somebody, or is that what the system should be?"* This

point was reinforced by the voluntary manager of a food bank and soup kitchen service in Glasgow who suggested the responsibility to find solutions must lie with the state: *"All these questions are geared towards voluntary organisations but there's not enough geared towards government, what's the government doing about this?"* In making recommendations for future action to address food poverty, it is clearly important to be aware of the range of perspectives among providers as to the role and responsibilities of emergency food aid.

In particular there is a need to recognise the strong position taken by many that emergency food aid must not become an established part of the welfare system:

> " *Now I will always have a job, because there will always be a need for emergency provision, but isn't the clue in emergency, I'm not a statutory welfare provision and I'm not meant to be.* "
> (food bank manager, Lanarkshire)

The sense that the state is allowing people to fall through the social safety net, particularly by imposing benefits sanctions, was powerfully summed up by one interviewee:

> " *They're only human beings that are trying to help you. I don't get how, it's all churches in Scotland and that, it's strange how the government don't have anything to do with it, it's strange how the government can sanction you and then you need to go, and these places are reliant on donations you know, and people. You see it round about the supermarkets, at the weekends you see folk with their leaflets asking for food for the food bank. But why's the government not, they can sanction you and punish you but when it comes to feeding you they're not interested.* "
> (male client, soup kitchen, East Ayrshire)

4. The Client's Experience

It was clear from both focus group and client interview data that people often face a complex range of barriers to initially entering a food bank and that turning to such support was seen as a last resort. Hunger and desperation were commonly mentioned as the reasons for people arriving at emergency food aid services, while fear, pride and shame were seen as significant barriers to people making that step. As a food bank volunteer in Lanarkshire commented: "*They're desperate and they've nowhere else to turn*". This sense of having no other choice was reiterated strongly in the client interviews. Speaking about his experience of going to a food bank, a male client interviewed at a soup kitchen in East Ayrshire stated, "*obviously you had to go cos it was either that or starve you know*". Another client interviewed at a voluntary organisation run food bank, when asked how he felt about using the service, stated: "*A bit of embarrassment, but needs must, you've got to feed yourself, you know what I mean, you're starving. What are you going to dae?*" When asked their opinions on the food they received, food bank clients in particular made it clear that choice and food preferences could not be a priority and that they felt they should be grateful for what they got: "*Food's food isn't it, you cannae be choosy with something you're getting for nothing, you've got to eat what's on the table*" (male client, voluntary organisation food bank, East Ayrshire); "*you've got to be grateful for what you get, you can't really demand stuff when you're starving you know*" (male client, soup kitchen, East Ayrshire);

> " on the one part it's no really healthy but if you're struggling you're going to take what you get, you cannae really be choosy.
> (female client, soup kitchen, East Ayrshire) "

Sudden loss of income through benefit sanctions or delays was the predominant reason why the clients interviewed were using food banks.

The experience of having to make use of a food bank was described by both clients and providers as often humiliating and degrading. The public perception of food banks was also mentioned as a source of anxiety for prospective clients: "*I think fear is a big barrier. Most people we have coming through the door have perceptions of what it will be like, either from what they have read in the media or heard it will be like*" (food bank manager, Glasgow). Emergency food aid clients also commented on this sense of fear and embarrassment of using a food

bank: "*it's more pride. Ken that way, you kind of feel, no ashamed but, you're feart in case you see someone you know and they talk about you*" (male, soup kitchen, East Ayrshire).

That the food bank might be the option of last resort for someone in crisis was also highlighted by both service providers and clients: "*They've maybe been hit once, twice, three times and eventually it's just, right I need to come in. It's not that I particularly want to but I need to*" (voluntary sector family support worker, Aberdeen). As highlighted in the interview extract above, a loss of independence and a sense of shame and degradation was felt at being forced to turn to a food bank: "*It's no like me, I like providing for myself, I like doing the shopping myself. So coming in here and begging was a bit embarrassing you know. But at the end of the day you've got to dae it, if you want to eat you've got to dae it.*" (male client, voluntary organisation food bank, East Ayrshire). Another client at this service stated: "*I'm no proud of it, I'm no proud of my situation. But you've got to dae it*".

Reaching people who feel too proud or ashamed to access emergency food aid was also identified as a significant challenge: "*even getting the food out to people can be a challenge because they're too embarrassed to pick up the food, we've had to leave food with the concierge, we've done things round corners, it's like cloak and dagger with some people because they can't think of being seen, some people have refused that service, they've been sanctioned, they're starving, but they're too proud to take the food, so we keep trying to get in there*" (female manager at Housing Association providing food parcels, Glasgow).

Focus group participants clearly appreciated that the needs of people coming to their services were likely to be far more complex than just the need for food, and this would require a wide range of support and intervention: "*what about mental health? What about people suffering bereavement? What about people who don't know where to turn because that big bill is coming up? What about people whose English is not their first language?*" (food bank manager, Edinburgh).

Craig's Experience:
"Until this happened everything was fine, until my sanction."

Craig is a man in his mid-30s who lives in East Ayrshire. He was interviewed during a visit to a food bank which is operated by a social enterprise project. Craig has accessed the food bank on a few occasions as a result of a recent sanction to his benefits. He was sent to the food bank by the Job Centre. This is an extract from the interview transcription in which he explains the situation which led to his sanction, an apparent miscommunication between state departments, and the impact which the loss of income has had.

Why did you first come to the food bank?

"Over the last two month I was sanctioned by the DWP. Basically I've had no income, no means of getting food so I've been relying on the food bank and stuff like that, and see if it wasn't for them, basically I'd have nothing at all.

At the time, I was meant to be doing a daily sign-in, but I told my coach worker that there's nae way I can do this at all. I says I've got community service a Tuesday, Wednesday and a Thursday. I says I can come in and sign on a Monday and a Friday, that's no problem at all, but the other days it's just no convenient at all. I don't finish community service until 4.30 and by the time I get to the Job Centre it's closed. And the next thing I ken I got a text message through saying that my claim had been closed down so I had to go and open a new claim. I eventually got a payment today which was for £12, I was expecting like £140, so I'm going to have to phone them up again. £12. I've got two kids at home as well. It just doesnae dae me at all. I've told the job centre.

I've put a reconsideration form in as well explaining the situation. To be honest I've been left high and dry, I've not had any feedback from them whatsoever, every time I've been in to speak to someone I'm getting nowhere, I'm getting passed from one person to the next person.

I said to them today, how can you expect me to live for two weeks on £12? I get my kids every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, so I've got to have food. I got a food bank voucher on Friday for me and my two kids."

How did you find out about the food bank?

"The DWP told me about it. If it wasn't for the food bank I'd have nothing to eat what's so ever…To me it's as if they're not interested, I was actually thinking of writing to the council and explaining about my situation. But I'm going to wait for my next giro, cos I don't want to muck my money up, for over Christmas, cos I'm kind of depending on it, you know."

How did you feel about using the food bank?

"t's no like me, I like providing for myself, I like doing the shopping myself. So coming in here and begging was a bit embarrassing you know. But at the end of the day you've got to dae it, if you want to eat you've got to dae it. "

Did the staff or volunteers at the food bank give you any advice?

"Aye, they've just telt me to keep my head up and try and not let it get to me but I'll be honest with you man it's hard, when you're struggling, and I've got two dogs and I'm thinking of having to give them up cos I'm struggling to feed them. Until this happened everything was fine, until my sanction."

However, as a coordinator of a peer mentoring project in Glasgow commented, the client themselves may struggle to articulate the nature of their own needs: *"they've come to you guys because they need food, but if you ask them why – they don't know because they don't know how the system works, they're not confident enough to go and they can't wait four weeks for an appointment, so hopelessness just sets in".* The fact that clients are likely to have a complex range of issues, many in situations of significant crisis, poses substantial challenges for emergency food aid providers in being able to adequately engage and support such individuals to access the services they will require.

Loneliness and social isolation were also identified in many cases as reasons why people might come to an emergency food aid service. Initially this might be a barrier to engagement: *"We're finding the loneliness and isolation is the thing people are finding really, really hard and even just the courage to come to the food bank is a massive deal for people"* (food bank volunteer, Lanarkshire). However, a number of participants mentioned that for some it is the social contact, rather than the food which is why they keep coming back to a service. As the manager of a food bank in Edinburgh stated: *"We have people queuing and they're not coming for food, they want to chat and get advice – we're part of the community".* This seemed particularly true for both community cafés and also soup kitchen type services. As the coordinator of a community food project in Glasgow stated: *"they're lonely and they want company and they like the sense of community which being at the café with other people in the area creates".*

This was reiterated in interviews with clients of soup kitchen type services who commonly identified the opportunity to socialise as a significant motivator for accessing such services. As one interviewee stated: *"I like meeting new people, especially when you meet people and they've no got anybody. There's people that come to these places that've no got anybody, and you can talk away to them, make their day a wee bit"* (female client, soup kitchen, Glasgow). From the perspective of this client, services providing hot meals act as a lifeline for many, *"I think if you didn't have places like this I don't think half the people that come here would be here to be honest, because they'd probably just drink or take drugs, and obviously pass away".* The importance of opportunities for social interaction and building relationships was emphasised strongly in an interview with a client who had become involved in volunteering at a social enterprise project through initially accessing the food bank which the same organisation operates:

> *I love the volunteering, I'd like to come here every day, it makes me feel better. See sitting in the hostel, I'm way back down to my usual, breaking down greeting, and folks getting on to me, and bullying me and things like that.*
> (female client, food bank, East Ayrshire)

Help with budgeting and managing on very low incomes was also identified as a reason for accessing services which serve free or very low cost meals. One client spoke of the community café project as an important resource while in recovery from addictions and trying to get on top of his debts, stating: *"It's to save money just now, until I get back on my feet."* A client of a different service providing meals, whilst recognising that during a period of home-lessness, *"I've came here probably more needy than I am today"*, commented on the challenge of trying to get by on benefits and how the service helped to reduce that stress:

> *if you're trying to cover daein stuff like that [furnishing a tenancy], and food, and clothing, and staying ahead of the game with all your bills and telly licenses and all that, then your back's against the wall a wee bit, now I know that happens with people that are working as well but being able to get a meal on a Monday and a Thursday night, for a pound you're fed, you don't have to worry about going shopping that day – it does ease the pressure, it's quite stressful being on benefits at times you know.*
> (male client, soup kitchen, Glasgow)

In addition, it is interesting to highlight that the client interview data suggests people often find out about existing services through word of mouth. When asked about signposting on from food services, many interviewees mentioned receiving advice or information from other clients, rather than necessarily from staff or volunteers. Creating space for socialising and peer support is therefore important for clients in helping to reduce isolation, build social networks and engage with other forms of support.

Treating people with respect and dignity, and welcoming them into a friendly, non-judgemental environment, were important ways in which emergency food aid services were identified as being able to have a positive impact on their clients. As one focus group participant, a food bank manager in Glasgow who had personal experience of using a food bank, stated: *"to have someone there, who is willing to listen and not judge you, it restores your faith a little bit, and they're as upset about your situation as you are… For me after I left I felt like a whole weight had been lifted, I felt like I had gone and done something positive by getting food for my kids rather than feeling guilty."* Many contrasted this experience with how clients might be treated in other contexts when dealing with officials:

> *the feedback we're getting is that people really appreciate it, that someone is caring and treating them as adults. One woman I spoke to was hating visiting the Job Centre and she found it really distressing, she hated being treated as less than someone, and she wasn't on sanctions but she was terrified that if she didn't meet what she needed to do each week that that might happen to her. And that's a more intangible benefit but just people caring for others.*
> (female food bank volunteer, West Dunbartonshire)

The importance of feeling safe, feeling welcome, and feeling respected, was also identified by the clients interviewed. At one meal provider (whose client group are mainly those with experiences of homelessness), fears about the behaviour of other clients were identified by the interviewees as a significant barrier to initially accessing the service. Having confidence that the project coordinator was in control and able to ensure a safe environment was hugely important to the clients, as a man in his 20s using a soup kitchen in Glasgow stated: *"knowing that I can come here and that I'll be safe, that's the main thing, knowing that I'll be safe rather than having to watch my back and watch everybody, who's this, who's that – I shouldn't have to do that. We should all be able to feel safe, and welcomed, and warm".*

By contrast, interviewees also spoke about experiences in other settings where the attitudes of staff and volunteers left clients feeling unwelcomed, unvalued, and at times unsafe. A female soup kitchen client in Glasgow spoke of her experiences as a teenager in a service where people were commonly drunk or under the influence of drugs, stating, *"it was hurting me seeing people like that".* A male interviewee at a community café in Glasgow compared his experiences in two different services which provided food: *"you didn't feel right going there, like you were begging for food, that's what it felt like, you know, I mean it doesn't feel like that here. But going to the soup kitchen, it feels degrading, you know".*

In explaining the reasons for the difference in their experiences, the interviewee identified the volunteers' attitudes and the quality of the food as important in making him feel respected: *"Some of the attitudes are a wee bit wrong, they look down on us, you know what I'm saying, anyone that goes there, you know, they sort of thrive in it, because they're serving volunteers in a soup kitchen – no them all obviously, but some of them can be a wee bit, eh, arrogant, would maybe be the right word".* He also commented on the poor quality of food provided at the particular soup kitchen compared to the community café project:

> *you usually just get sandwiches. So for nourishment. That doesn't nourish you properly, a piece and cheese doesn't nourish you, it's full of fat.. I try and eat healthy, I like coming here because I can eat healthy, I eat healthy. Even though I was daein what I was daein I still ate healthy. I still tried to look after myself as well, even though I was struggling.*
> (Soup kitchen client, Glasgow)

This comment suggests the importance of recognising the need and desire of people in complex circumstances to eat well. When asked to comment on how projects providing food could be improved, this interviewee stated that the quality of the food and the attitudes of the staff were the two most important issues. He recommended that staff and volunteers should: *"treat people like a million dollars, even though they've come for free food, treat people with respect and things like that, just the way you would if you worked in a shop, treat people that way".* Concern about the capacity of volunteers to deal with potentially challenging behaviour was expressed by two clients interviewed together at a soup kitchen run by a faith group in East Ayrshire. When asked how the service could be improved, one client stated: *"Having volunteers that's no old and frail and feart to say anything…just mare rules, mare regulations just now folk can just do what they want and get away with it".*

David's Experience:

"We should all be able to feel safe, and welcomed, and warm"

David is a man in his early 20s who lives in Glasgow. He was interviewed during a visit to a soup kitchen in Glasgow which he attends regularly. At the age of 15 David found himself entering "the homeless scene", as he describes it, having lost both of his parents. It was in this context that he first experienced accessing emergency food aid. He described his experience of one particular soup kitchen:

"I didn't feel as though I was very welcomed when I first went there. I thought maybe it's just cos I was a new face and no one really knows me, stuff like that. So I decided last year that I would go at Christmas time for a dinner. The people were very rude. The way they talk to you, their body language, they didn't sound as though they were interested in helping people that are in my situation, being homeless and stuff like that, they weren't really offering much help for myself – especially when I first went there I was only like 15."

Having recently spent a short period in prison, David explained that, on the day of our interview, his main reason for attending the soup kitchen was because there had been a delay in processing his benefits. He described his experience of being released without having his benefits claim processed;

"I got my papers the night before so it's was kind of late timing that they told me, or I could have seen my worker and said look I'm getting released at such and such a time tomorrow, can we put in a rapid reclaim or something, but she wasnae in because it was a Friday I got released and she doesn't work on a Friday so, I had to come away out and then wait til the Monday to start a new claim."

For David, the most important thing about the drop-in meal service is that he feels safe and welcomed there. This is an extract from the interview:

Did you have any fears, anything you were worried about before you came?

"I was a bit anxious and that you know and I didn't know anybody so I didn't know what to expect, like through the homelessness scheme you know it was quite a big shock to me, some of the states that people were in. But [project manager] is very well controlled here, he's happy to say no you're not coming in tonight, you're under the influence. So you're not allowed to come in if you're heavily under the influence, because you could be putting someone else's life in danger, depending on what you've taken so.."

That's reassuring for you then?

Knowing that I can come here and that I'll be safe, that's the main thing, knowing that I'll be safe rather than having to watch my back and watch everybody, who's this, who's that – I shouldn't have to do that. We should all be able to feel safe, and welcomed, and warm."

David also spoke about a recent experience of visiting a food bank. He was referred to a food bank by his key worker, whose reassurance helped prepare him for the visit. He described his visit, explaining how the overcrowded conditions made him feel uncomfortable, and limited opportunities for volunteers to engage in any meaningful way with clients. This is an extract from the interview:

Did you have any fears about going along to it?

"No, because she'd [key worker] said that its all different kinds of people and some people are doing well for themselves and some are needing a lot of support, so just expect it not to be the best of places to go to but at the end of the day you're getting yourself food, and that's the main thing."

Can you tell me a bit about the experience?

"People made you a cup of tea, gave you a biscuit. Made you a cup of tea and told you to sit down, gave you a ticket and that was your number and whenever your number got called out that was you and you were to go into the next hall and you were allowed to pick two things from each box and that was you, basically you got a full week's shopping. It was kind for people to do that for us. For like people like myself, I appreciated it, I don't know about other people's views are, whether they like it or they don't but I've got to say it's really helpful, you'll never go hungry in Glasgow. "

Did any of the staff or volunteers speak to you at all?

"They were a bit run off their feet, it was quite overcrowded they were kind of letting too many people in, so they were, there was a big roomful, we were all jammed up, sitting on seats drinking tea and coffee, you could hardly breathe, there were people practically sitting on your leg. I kind of thought that was a bit messed up, in that way."

Steven's Experience:

"Treat people like a million dollars"

Steven is in his early 40s and lives in the north of Glasgow. He has physical disabilities and suffers from mental health problems. He is currently in recovery from drug addiction. Steven attends a community café project which serves freshly prepared, vegetarian meals once a week. Steven has experience of homelessness and of accessing a number of soup kitchens and other emergency food aid services in Glasgow. At this particular project Steven is able to mix with people from a range of backgrounds which is helpful in his recovery. He explained during an interview at the project why the quality of the food is important: *"The food's excellent. I'm trying to be a vegetarian so it helps me pick up tips on what to cook."* Steven also compared the quality of the food at this project, with what he received at other services providing food for people experiencing homelessness:

"you usually just get sandwiches. So for nourishment. That doesn't nourish you properly, a piece and cheese doesn't nourish you, it's full of fat…I try and eat healthy, I like coming here because I can eat healthy, I eat healthy. Even though I was daein what I was daein I still ate healthy. I still tried to look after myself as well, even though I was struggling"

Steven also explained the difference between his experience at this project, and services which feel like charity, where *"you still feel a bit like a beggar"*:

"you didn't feel right going there, like you were begging for food, that's what it felt like, you know, I mean it doesn't feel like that here. But going to the soup kitchen, it feels degrading, you know… Some of the attitudes are a wee bit wrong, they look down on us, you know what I'm saying, anyone that goes there, you know, they sort of thrive in it, because they're serving volunteers in a soup kitchen – no them all obviously , but some of them can be a wee bit, eh, arrogant, would maybe be the right word."

For Steven, *"how you're treated is a big thing"*:

"The way you'd work in a shop, treat people like a million dollars, even though they've come for free food, treat people with respect and things like that, just the way you would if you worked in a shop, treat people that way – I mean it's no too difficult.

I mean I had my own ice cream van, I know how to treat people, I worked on the railway, I know how to treat people, you know – it's no too difficult."

Through attending the community café project, Steven had met an advisor from Citizens Advice who was able to help him begin the process of resolving a long standing issue with an energy company which had had a significant impact on his finances.

He explained the need to provide information and advice on such issues in settings such as the community café project, in order to reach those who might not otherwise access such support:

"I suppose dealing with electricity companies. What sort of benefits we're allowed stuff like that. I just found out, it's been running for years, but I just found out, because I'm disabled, I can get £150 off my gas bill every year, and I didn't know about that until about three weeks ago, and it's been running for years…There must be other people that don't know about it."

In closing the interview, Stephen expressed concern at the failure to address the root causes of poverty;

"I think it's a good thing it's getting talked about. Poverty is a bad thing I think. I mean I'm 46 and we lived in poverty, when I was young, and my family all worked. My Mum worked as a manageress and my uncle – we stayed with my uncle – he was a joiner, so good jobs but we had the electricity cut off and things like that when we were young. So we lived in poverty. Let's hope it can get dealt with. That was what 30 years ago and it's no changed much, I mean people are working and still live in poverty, and they say the way out of poverty is through work – who's kidding who? A lot of the reason for poverty is man's greed, man's greed basically…I don't think it's that difficult to deal with poverty, I think they're at it, the ones in power, I think they're at it the ones that run companies and things like that."

5. Referral policies: advantages and challenges

Differences in models of referrals for emergency food aid was a key theme emerging from the focus group data. Several discussed how operating a referral process made it easier for volunteers to manage clients, as one participant commented: *"I think if their referral has been done, that's easy for volunteers to deal with because that's within the process that we have trained them up in"* (manager of community food project run food bank, North East). A significant advantage to this way of working, from the perspective of the provider, is a sense that the responsibility to pass judgement on the needs and eligibility of a client for emergency food aid lies with the referral agency and not with their own staff/volunteers. As another participant stated: *"We're not about assessing need, that's up to the referral agency before they come to us"*. A further participant commented that, while they recognising the appeal of allowing self-referrals, this would require a level of engagement with the client which is beyond the capacity of their emergency food aid service:

> " The *key thing is if we were to move to a much more open, looser, perhaps more inclusive, more engaging model, but would we perhaps be missing things…do you miss actually following it up, because as we said we don't actually have the volunteers who are sitting down and saying oh right, that person said they're having trouble with their finances and they've got a little one so let's phone Action for Children and follow that up, we don't have that capacity. For that reason I'm very keen to stick to our system of how folk get to us.*
> (food bank manager, faith group, Dundee) "

From the perspective of one client interviewee with recent experience of accessing a food bank, the process of being referred was a reassuring one. The referrer was able to calm any initial fears he had and prepare him for what the experience might be like. In response to the question, *"Did you have any fears before going? [to the food bank]"*, the interviewee stated, *"No, because she'd [keyworker] said that it's all different kinds of people go and some people are doing well for themselves and some are needing a lot of support, so just expect it not to be the best of places to go to but at the end of the day you're getting yourself food, and that's the main thing"*. However it is unclear how far the level of support and advice provided by the referrer in this context [the key worker for a young homeless person] is common among other referral agencies.

The research data suggested that a range of challenges are often encountered when operating processes of referral for emergency food aid. The range of issues and their potential impacts, as suggested by the research data are summarised in the table below and then considered in more detail in the following discussion.

Referral 'issue'	Potential impacts
Agency makes food bank referral as 'default'	Over-demand on food banks Client's wider needs may not have been fully assessed Client may have not been signposted for other services or support they are entitled to
Clients self-refer	Volunteers have to make judgement call and may not have suitable training to do so Client's wider needs may not be fully assessed Increasing demand on food banks
Agencies which refer to food banks are not clear on the process	Clients requiring emergency food aid may not be able to access it Clients may face barriers to accessing emergency food aid (due to admin errors, food bank referred to is closed or too far away)
Over-demand on referrer agencies (such as advice services)	Potential emergency food aid clients have to wait before being referred
Conflicting approaches between referrer agencies and emergency food aid providers	Clients do not receive appropriate support Clients receive conflicting or misleading information/advice
Lack of appropriate referrer agencies in an area	Client's referrer by non-specialist agencies and therefore wider needs may not have been fully assessed Client may have not been signposted for other services or support they are entitled to

Considering the question of how providers support clients beyond the provision of food, it is apparent that many perceive operating a referrals system as reassurance that the client is receiving the support they require to address their underlying issues. As a consequence they might be less likely to engage with clients around the reasons they may be requiring emergency food aid, or referring them on to other services. This approach was questioned by the manager of a community food project run food bank: *"I also want to challenge the notion that 'professionals' are going to somehow be right in their judgement"*. The potential that a referral does not guarantee a client is receiving sufficient or appropriate support was also raised by a the manager of a food bank in Lanarkshire: *"sometimes what's on the referral isn't necessarily what's playing out and on the basis of what they say we will be able to signpost to other agencies"*.

Several participants also described challenges around negotiating with different agencies referring in to emergency food aid providers, and developing effective referral processes when agencies differ in their own practical and policy restrictions on how they engage with such organisations. Clients are referred or directed to food banks by (amongst others) social workers, GPs, housing officers, Citizens Advice Bureaux advisors and Job Centre staff. The manager of a community food project operating a food bank in the North East described their relationship with the local Job Centre which is not able to act as a formal referral agency, but has agreed to write *"a signposting letter"* and will record on it if a person has been sanctioned and for how long. The food bank will then provide food for as long as the sanction lasts. Three of the emergency food aid clients interviewed had been sanctioned and directed to a food bank by Job Centre staff.

A volunteer in a food bank in Lanarkshire explained that they run compulsory training for all referral agencies so that they have a clear understanding of how their emergency food aid service operates. Another volunteer in a faith group run food bank operating in a small town in the North East spoke about needing to be *"creative"* with their referrals to enable more people to access food parcel vouchers. This involved signing up a wide range of organisations as referrers including the pharmacist and local charity shops. If the referral system is intended to ensure that clients' wider needs are being addressed by an appropriate agency, there is a danger that clients referred to food banks by agencies without that capacity may miss out on the specialist support and services available to them. Client interviews also suggested that miscommunication between referrer agencies and food banks can create problems for people following up on a referral. One client spoke about her experience of being referred to a food bank a long distance from her home, only to find it shut when she arrived:

> *when I got to the door there was nae answer and then a car pulled up, and there could have been nae answer but luckily she says, 'I'm no really supposed to dae this noo', she says, 'cos the form's no been filled in right' – I don't know if that's true or no but she ended up giving it to me anyway cos I said I was fae [local town] and I'd trekked all the way up on the bus.*
> (food bank client, East Ayrshire)

Responses to the survey of Citizens Advice Bureau highlighted that in some contexts the referral systems between emergency food aid providers and CABs are seen by the latter to be working well, but in others there have been difficulties. For example one CAB respondent commented on conflict over judgement of need, where the emergency food aid provider had asked the CAB to stop referring people whom they had already refused to provide food to. Of the CABs which took part in the survey, 86% will refer clients directly to providers of emergency food parcels. 59% refer clients to food parcel delivery services, and 45% to services which provide clients with a hot meal.

86%
of CABx surveyed refer clients for emergency food parcels

Another issue regarding operating with a referral policy was concern that the referral agencies themselves did not have the capacity to manage demand, as a food bank coordinator commented: *"some of the agencies have staffing issues themselves and they can't do all the things that we would want them to do. Some of the agencies themselves struggle"* A volunteer at a food bank in Lanarkshire expressed concern that some of their key referral agencies had significant waiting lists and that people in desperate situations had to wait several weeks for an appointment. She felt this could cause delay in people being referred on to her service. On the other hand, a number of participants in different focus groups spoke about concerns that agencies were *'off-loading'* clients onto the emergency food aid providers. As a voluntary organisation run food bank volunteer in Lanarkshire stated: *"we don't want to be seen as a catch all agency for Councils, we can pap them off to the food bank and they'll give them food, we don't want to be seen as the easy touch."* The manager of a community food project operating a food bank in the North East also commented: *"one of the things we've had to do is phone a number of agencies and say stop dumping people on us".*

A significant challenge mentioned by many providers operating a referrals system, is the ethical dilemma of dealing with a request for food from someone who arrives not having been referred by another agency. As the manager of a faith group run food bank in Aberdeen stated: *"You're confronted by a case of someone turning up with what appears to be a genuine case but without a referral, are you really going to turn someone away and potentially starve?"* The tension between not wanting to refuse to feed someone in need, and the fear of not wanting to be taken advantage of, overwhelmed by demand, or responsible for identifying a *"genuine case"*, was something which clearly troubled many participants. There was concern expressed as to the sustainability of running a completely open service, as the manager of a faith group run food bank in Aberdeen commented: *"It's not just about anybody coming in because you have to regulate it and actually you do end up with people becoming dependent".* However, those who did not require clients to be referred from other agencies considered theirs to be a more inclusive and non-judgmental approach, as the manager of a community food project run community café stated: *"they don't feel judged because there's no qualification to walk through the door".*

6. Providing more than food

For the clients of emergency food aid services interviewed, there were some differences between views of the value of, and priorities for, additional services within food banks, and at places serving meals. Clients of soup kitchens and community cafes identified that after food, it was the provision of a safe, welcoming space and the opportunity to socialise which they valued most. When asked if they could think of any additional services which they would like to see provided, interviewees commonly mentioned more opportunities for socialising, and three were particularly concerned about isolation among older people they knew in the community or met at the emergency food service. Provision of a drugs councillor was also mentioned, as was the potential for raising awareness of issues such as important benefit changes and how to deal with energy companies through information sessions delivered in projects which have a community café-type setting.

Clients interviewed about their experiences of food banks were generally less clear as to the need for other services within the food bank, and had fewer suggestions for what they might like to see provided in that setting. Issues regarding benefits and sanctions in particular were the priority for food bank users interviewed. One client of a food bank in East Ayrshire felt that beyond providing a general advice service, there was little more that the food bank could offer people in his situation whose benefits had been stopped and had no choice but turn to the food bank for food: *"cos Citizens Advice they really cover everything. But you're sanctioned so it's just benefits, and once you're sanctioned you're sanctioned and the appeal takes like 8 months. But aye, it's a good enough place."*

Emergency food aid providers involved in the study felt strongly that they should be offering more than what the manager of an Edinburgh food bank described as *"a calorific exchange".* A number of participants sought to emphasise that their services were about much more than food: *"what we're really about is not the food but trying to help people and trying to support them wherever they are"* (volunteer, faith group run food bank, Lanarkshire). The manager of a community food project operating a food bank in the North East summarised the importance of providing a holistic service: *"food banks urnae a helpful activity, they've got to be aligned with the capacity to provide other information, support, awareness raising, for the individuals and families affected by poverty".*

Respondents to the survey were given a list of services and asked whether these were things they provided themselves, partnered with another agency to provide, or referred clients on to. Figure 3 below summarises the findings from this question. The most common service identified by respondents as being directly provided to clients was emotional support which was identified by 70% of respondents. The provision of informal emotional support also came through strongly in the qualitative data analysis.

70%
of respondents provide informal emotional support

Several commented on the positive impact this engagement had on their clients, *"they see that someone cares for them, they see someone's there for them".* While the manager of one faith group run food parcel service described how a number of their volunteers are trained *'listeners'*, it was clear that emotional support was not generally provided in any formalised way, such as through mentoring or counselling, but in the form of a non-judgemental, listening ear.

Figure 3

Source:
Survey data, August 2014

Legend:
- Provide
- Partner With
- Refer To
- Ad–hoc Signpost

Categories (top to bottom): Emotional support, Welfare Advice, Financial/debt Advice, Budgeting Advice, Scottish Welfare Fund, Housing Support Services, Mental Health Services, Drugs & Alcohol Services, Employment Services, Energy Advice, Woman's Aid

X-axis: Number of Providers (0 to 60)
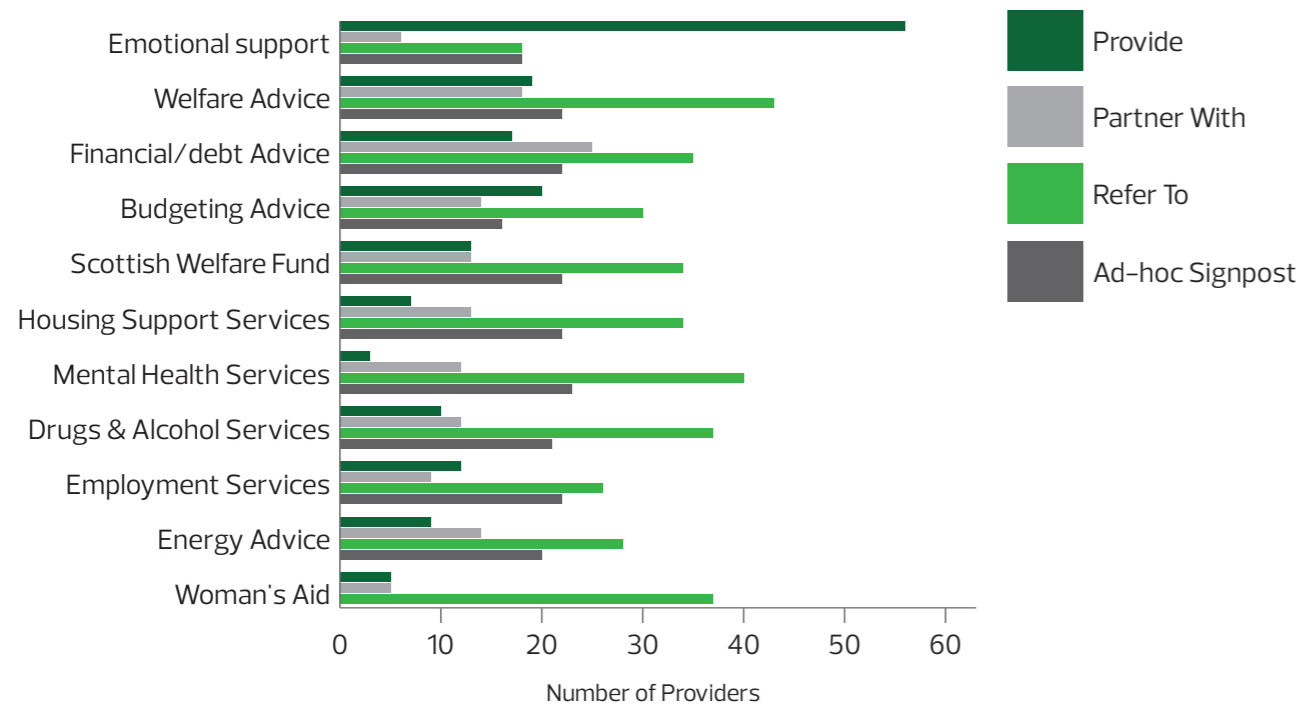
6.1 In-formal advocacy and engagement with specialist advisors

Providing, or connecting clients to some form of advice or advocacy service was hugely important to participants in this study. Having trained advisors available to speak to clients at the emergency food aid service, most commonly from the local Citizens Advice Bureau or housing association welfare rights officer, was seen by providers as particularly effective: *"From our experience, the most useful is if there's somebody there for someone to speak to whilst they're in"* (manager, community food project run community café, Glasgow). This model meant clients could be linked in to specialist advice immediately, rather than requiring them to travel to another agency and overcome further barriers:

> " We have the Advice Centre which does a drop in which is great because if they're sitting there they will talk to them but if we say you've got to go to [local town] then they won't go.
> (food bank manager, Central Scotland).
>
> So it's not a case of there's a leaflet, go and find that yourself which is a huge issue when you're in crisis – its there's the person, sit there and they'll see you later .. the ones that do better, in my opinion are the ones that do more than just hand out the food because I think the food is the sticking plaster but it's not the cure.
> (NHS staff member, Edinburgh). "

The need for this to be a professional service was raised: *"We can now get CAB to employ someone whose job it is to be there, because it doesn't work if you're trying to get them to do it as an extra"* (NHS staff member, Edinburgh). Many providers have trained advisors available at their emergency food aid service on a weekly basis. Others mentioned occasional drop-in or training sessions delivered by a range of agencies including Christians Against Poverty who provide debt advice and money management training.

Only one participant described a negative experience of this model: *"We did trial Citizens Advice in the food bank, it didn't work, people didn't want to do that there and they actually balked against having the agency there, they see our volunteers as figures of trust"* (volunteer, faith group run food bank, Lanarkshire). The majority had experienced a positive up-take and providing advisors onsite at emergency food aid services appears to be regarded as good practice and a model which is being replicated across the country. However some did express concern that they did not receive the number of clients through the door to make such an additional service viable. By contrast others suggested the support agencies did not have the capacity to meet demand: *"we originally set up hoping to have welfare rights advisors and citizens advice at each hub, that's proving really challenging capacity wise, not for us but for them"*.

Having specialist advisors on site at an emergency food aid service was also discussed in the client interviews. One client at a community café project in Glasgow had experience of engaging with a CAB advisor in this context

and commented on the advantage of speaking to someone from a service he was aware of and knew was able to provide support, but which he was otherwise unlikely to have gone to by himself: *"It was unexpected, but it was very useful. I hudnae thought about what had happened to us for a few years, but because of that it has helped me want to get it sorted"*. A second client at the same service also commented on the advantage of making advice services more accessible; *"it saves people travelling away up to [name of area], the middle of [name of area], especially in this weather as well. And the sooner the better, the sooner that people go to these places"*. Whilst the benefits of providing advice services were well recognised, it should also be noted that clients at this service appeared to be unclear as to when the CAB advisor attended the project. One interviewee was in fact unaware that the CAB advisor was available at the project, but suggested that she would benefit from advice with her upcoming ESA medical assessment which was causing her some anxiety: *"it's like a big ball that's just stuck in your mind, and it's all riddled up, and you cannae get out of it"*. This suggests a need to for staff to clearly communicate to clients the availability of such services and that some more vulnerable clients may require additional support to engage with advisors. In addition, the advisors themselves could integrate with clients at the service, chatting with them to help identify those who could benefit from specialist advice, rather than waiting to be approached.

A client at a different service which provided hot meals in Glasgow but which did not have an advice service on site discussed in interview the potential implications of such provision being made available. He was hesitant as to the appropriateness of the setting, suggesting the length of time available, and potential tension between clients which it might generate as reasons why introducing an advice service into this food project might not be feasible: *"I suppose if somebody was desperate enough, if their benefits were threatened, they'd maybe take their meal over and talk to them… aye maybe, it's just my ain experience with welfare rights people is you dae need a bit of time with them, it takes maybe an hour to work through things with them… it could cause a bit of unmanageability, you know – "I was waiting to see him before you", it might cause a wee bit of friction"*.

The provision of some level of advocacy support to clients by volunteers and/or staff at emergency food aid services was identified through focus group discussions as important, as summed up by a community health project manager in Lanarkshire who commented: *"what we seem to be saying is that there's an element of advocacy that we need to be able to develop with the supply of emergency food"*. However there appeared to be significant variation in how that advocacy was delivered and it did not appear that many providers gave formal training to their volunteers. Some identified the need to provide flexible support depending on the needs of the individual:

> " There isn't one size fits all, sometimes you fill in a referral form, sometimes you make a phone call, and sometimes you do have to take them, because as much as we want to empower folk, sometimes they're so closed down its difficult to do anything.
> (food bank manager, Edinburgh) "

The value of phoning agencies with, or on behalf of a client was widely recognised. This was seen to help clients overcome both personal barriers - *"Some people don't have intervention in their lives and it's having the confidence to access something on your own, a lot of people don't have the confidence to do it. So if someone sits by the phone and does it for them, or even begins the conversation"* (voluntary sector family support worker, Aberdeen) - and practical barriers to engaging with mainstream agencies - *"Sometimes that's more effective though, to actually phone while they're there… that's an issue because people often don't have money in their phones to make a call"* (food bank manager, Central Scotland).

This advocacy support was described by a client interviewed at a soup kitchen in Glasgow, who described another soup kitchen service in the city where: *"They can give you support using the telephone, calling Job Centre, the doctors whatever"*. A further interviewee spoke about the same service which she initially accessed for the hot meals provided, but has since been assigned a support worker. She described the impact this support has had on her: *"I never knew how to fill out forms. Anne's [support worker] given me mock interviews, pretending that she's the housing officer and I'm the person. I never could have spoke to people. I never could have spoke to yous if it wasn't for them. I would be too shy, but now, I'm dead confident now"*. However, this level of support clearly requires a level of professionalization and organisation which many newer, more informal, volunteer-led emergency food aid services cannot offer. It was also apparent from the providers involved in the study that issues of time, volunteer capacity, and space make it difficult to provide a consistent service: *"it's a fairly informal process, and one of the challenges is it depends how many turn up to help on a night just quite how we manage to get round everyone"* (food bank manager, Lanarkshire). The level and quality of advocacy support a client might receive was also likely to vary significantly depending on the knowledge and experience which an individual volunteer might have.

6.2 Referring on and sign-posting

Connecting emergency food aid provision with support and advice around financial and welfare/benefits issues appear to be very common. 76% of survey respondents either provide, partner with, or formally refer clients to financial/debt advice, and the same percentage for welfare/benefits advice. 35% of CABx survey respondents stated that they receive referrals to their services from emergency food aid providers. The average estimated number of such referrals received per month is 5. Connections with energy advice, employment services and women's aid appear slightly less common and are more likely to be made on an ad hoc basis than through a partnership or formal referral arrangement.

> **35%** of CABx respondents receive referrals from emergency food aid providers.

When asked about their ability to support clients around their needs beyond the need for food, 24% of survey respondents felt they were very effective, 36% moderately effective, and 30% occasionally effective. 10% stated they were not effective at this as their role is to provide food only. Respondents were also asked to rate a list of potential barriers to effectively meeting clients' needs from 0, indicating this wasn't a barrier, to 6 which indicated a very significant barrier. Lack of resources emerged as the most important, with an average rating of 4.2. Lack of volunteer training received an average rating of 3 and several respondent added additional comments regarding volunteers. Two commented on a lack of volunteer expertise and confidence in their ability to advise people, while a third mentioned that volunteers were more likely to want to work 'behind the scenes' and that finding those willing to man the food bank was more difficult. Linked to the topic of volunteers, two further comments highlighted a lack of time to make connections with other agencies, or to spend with clients as this work is done by volunteers with other commitments.

Key barriers to effectively referring and sign-posting clients to other services were also raised in the focus groups. A lack of time and resources was important, as the manager of a Lanarkshire food bank stated: *"you literally don't have time to say well listen you need to go there, because you've got a backlog of people. What I'm saying is you can do it in some situations but you can't in others because you simply don't have the time, the resources or the man power"*. The experience of attending a food bank as described by a client interviewed at a soup kitchen in Glasgow also suggests that a lack of time, space and resources, compounded by high-levels of demand, limit providers' ability to engage with clients: *"They were a bit run off their feet, it was quite overcrowded they were kind of letting too many people in, so they were, there was a big*

roomful, we were all jammed up, sitting on seats drinking tea and coffee, you could hardly breath, there were people practically sitting on your leg… They [the volunteers] were alright, they didn't say much. They were really hard worked, so they were, running back and forward, shouting everyone's names, giving tea and coffee out".*

Again, it was recognised that, in order to provide a consistent service, there is a need to work with trained professionals: *"That's why we've just got funding to work with Citizens Advice, because I've got 120, 150 volunteers and they are well meaning, but things change so quickly, and it's interpretation"* (food bank manager, Edinburgh). Volunteers' capacity, confidence and motivation to engage with clients in order to link them in effectively with other services appeared to be a key barrier:

> *I felt that if we were relying on volunteers, very well meaning volunteers, at the (food) coops, the possibility was, the worst scenario, that they'd give the wrong information and what we tried to do with ours was limit the information which the volunteers give because they're not able to keep themselves up to speed*
> (manager, community health project run food parcel. service, Lanarkshire)

A volunteer at a faith group run food bank in Lanarkshire also commented *"I think our volunteers would find it too overwhelming to get all of that knowledge of where to point people to"*. One CAB survey respondent also commented on the issue of the lack of knowledge among emergency food aid volunteers of the issues facing people in crisis, or of the range of existing support services available: *"Many volunteers in food banks do not fully understand that there are other services that can help the people accessing the foodbanks at the moment. Many have never been in debt or survived on benefits so have no idea of how badly Welfare Reform and rising prices are actually affecting the working poor and those on benefits"*.

It was clear that many volunteers were not comfortable with going beyond the provision of food: as volunteer at a faith group run food bank in the North East commented *"I think we would find it quite intrusive to be asking those kinds of questions"*. This issue links with the benefits which several saw in operating a referral system. As the manager of a community health project run food parcel service in Lanarkshire commented, they would prefer to *"leave it to that agency to get the background, rather than asking our volunteers to have really any level of knowledge because we are trying to be open, friendly, non-judgemental"*. Even when providers had paid staff, several challenges were mentioned regarding effective and consistent onward referrals/signposting. As the manager of a community health project operating a food bank in the North East stated: *"One reason [for referral process not working effectively] is the pressure of work, but I think there are*

also real issues around people understanding the processes and the need for this"*. Ensuring sufficient training, information, and buy-in from staff to enable them to effectively connect an individual to the appropriate statutory and voluntary organisations to support them around a complex range of issues is clearly a significant challenge.

Access to up-to-date, comprehensive information on the services available at a local level was also identified as a barrier to effectively linking clients in to appropriate support. Frustration was expressed at the lack of readily available information and having to actively seek it out from various places, rather than having access to a ready-compiled, easy to use, central source of information; as the manager of a soup kitchen and food parcel service in Glasgow stated: *"give us the material to give out as opposed to, "now you go out and find all these things" – that would be great if I had the time to do that, I don't"*.

Some mentioned trying to collate information themselves, but were unsure as to the effectiveness of this approach: *"because there's leaflets from so many things and so many organisations we started pulling together sheets, trying to summarise that, but…sometimes English isn't a first language, so reading information can be really challenging, and we are still trying to find the best way to signpost people for relevant help and support"*.

Several participants also identified the need to have specific information and links directly to very local agencies and sources of support:

> *It's knowing where to send people, and you can sit down with someone and you'll get through to a call centre in the centre of Glasgow and we need to have links with people in our area.*
> (food bank volunteer, Lanarkshire)

Engaging with mainstream services was often identified as frustrating, confusing and time consuming, particularly when calling central switchboards: *"you find yourself being moved from one person to the next and you can't get a straight answer"*.

Those emergency food aid providers who appeared most effective and most confident in their onward referral processes, where those which had relationships with named individuals within specific agencies. As the manager of a food bank in Central Scotland commented: *"I keep folks names, at every agency when I find someone helpful I keep their name and then when I need to call an agency I ask for them and they help me"*. A manager at a food bank in Glasgow also stated: *"Having key people that are points of contact for us, so it's not just a phone call into an organisation but you have a named person who you can contact and get a beneficiary linked in to their system"*.

Another participant commented on how these relationships might help break down the barriers to engagement:

> *I think people in crisis are more receptive if you can say, phone Noreen, I know this girl phone her and she'll sort you out.*
> (food bank manager, Glasgow)

This was echoed by another who commented: *"our aim has been to set up really good working relationships with these referring agencies so they know us and we know them so that they're also effectively like food bank in the community and they can say you know what, it's not that scary, the people are lovely"*. A volunteer in a faith group run food bank in Lanarkshire recognised that not having these connections and relationships was a barrier to effectively connecting clients to further support: *"I think what we feel we're missing at the moment is knowing where to direct people to and building up informal relationships with the people in our local area in those particular agencies, so you can just pick up the phone to the CAB and ask where we can direct people to"*.

The clients of emergency food aid services who were interviewed were very unlikely to read leaflets or written information about services unless pinpointed to it by staff directly. One interviewee at a community café project in Glasgow which had a table full of different information and signposting leaflets was unaware of it and said they preferred to get advice from someone in person: *"No, I've no really seen it. I never knew it was there. I'd rather speak to somebody and get it over and done with and just get it out the road"*. A second interviewee at this service, when asked about the leaflets felt they were unlikely to be relevant; *"[they're] no really directed towards me, I don't always look mind, I keep forgetting they're there"*. In addition, the same interviewee, when describing a visit to a food bank, suggested that he might have been more likely to engage with information about other services if it was highlighted to him directly by staff: *"I think they had other things going on, but they never really mentioned it, just sorted the food out, but I could see on the board there were other things on, computer classes and things like that"*.

A further barrier to effectively connecting clients with other services was the issue of client engagement. It was clear from the providers involved in the study that people entering the emergency food aid service are very often experiencing extreme crisis and therefore may struggle to engage with offers of further support or advice at that point. As the manager of a community health project operating a food bank in the North East stated:

> *if you have people coming in who are really in crisis, they have no reason to trust the person they're speaking to. They want a food parcel and they're nae there to speak about money advice or anything else. What we find it takes 2, 3, 4, maybe more visits to engage in that conversation about support.*
> (food bank manager, community health project, North East)

Another participant expressed concern that clients may not follow up on referrals made: *"We have connections with organisations which support people with drug and alcohol problems which we can recommend to them, and we can tell them we're sending 'so and so' down, but sometimes you know yourselves that they don't go"*. As described below, focus group and client interview data suggests that engagement with onward referrals is more likely if clients can be connected with named individuals within agencies, recommended by people they trust, or ideally follow up with CAB or welfare rights advisors whom they have had initial contact with within the emergency food aid service. The clients interviewed as part of this study suggested a generally low-level of awareness about the support services which are available to them or the benefits which they are entitled to. One interviewee at a community café service in Glasgow commented on the need for more accessible advice services: *"a lot of people don't know about these things. It's good to have something like that around here, because people need it"*.

Another interviewee described recently discovering, through an advert on the TV, that because of his disability he was entitled to a discount on his energy bill. He also suggested that people were generally unaware of this benefit: *"There must be other people that don't know about it. I've already mentioned it in [mental health support group], and the person I mentioned it to, they don't know anything about it, he said 'oh it's good if you know all the scams'*, I said *'it's not a scam it's something you're entitled to'"*. Information sessions delivered in emergency food aid services on specific issues such as energy advice and dealing with energy suppliers, were suggested as ways in which clients could become better informed and equipped to access support and services.

7. Partnership Working

In aiming to understand how emergency food aid providers connect clients to mainstream services, it was important to consider their current practices and attitudes regarding partnership working. The survey asked respondents about their connections with other emergency food aid providers. 40% of respondents said they felt well connected with other providers in their area, and 39% felt a little connected. Almost half indicated that they are involved in partnerships with other emergency food aid providers, of these partnerships the vast majority operate at a local level, with varying degrees of formal arrangement.

46% of respondents are involved in partnerships with other emergency food aid providers

The most important role of these partnerships appears to be the sharing and redistribution of food between providers to help maintain stock levels. Others commented on the advantage of sharing ideas, problems and examples of good practice. Members of the Trussell Trust network commented on the benefits of being able to share food and take part in national food collections, as well as having good relations with other Trussell Trust members at a local level. However several respondents mentioned challenges regarding independent food banks connecting with Trussell Trust members, and vice versa. 42% of respondents felt that there are particular barriers to effective partnership working between emergency food aid providers in their areas. In specifying these barriers, respondents most commonly mentioned disagreements as to the most effective model of provision - particularly around the arguments for and against operating a referral system - as posing a particular challenge to partnership working.

Differences in values and beliefs about the goals of food banks appear to hinder joint working and tension/suspicion between Trussell Trust members and other emergency food aid providers emerged quite strongly from the comments left by respondents.One respondent stated: *"Sometimes we get the impression that they [the Trussell Trust] think we aren't doing a good job just because we aren't doing it the same way they do things. We were operating long before the Trussell Trust became active in Scotland and already had everything established, so felt we didn't need to pay to join"*. Other challenges mentioned include, lack of information about other providers, and lack of time to engage in networking.

However, the value and importance of networking between food banks was emphasised: *"It is a lonely job, I'd like the food banks to talk to each other"* (food bank manager, Lanarkshire). This focus group participant also suggested that opportunities to bring together different emergency food aid services would be welcomed:

> *Sharing good practice, wouldn't it be good if we all got together, we're not all under the Trussell Trust banner but we're essentially all trying to do the same thing, trying to meet people's needs in the areas we are working in, and the big thing for me is sharing best practice. If I'm not included, then I can't share that.*
> (food bank manager, Lanarkshire)

These comments, and the positive feedback received following participation in the focus groups for this study, suggest the value of further opportunities to bring different providers together.

Almost half of the survey respondents are involved in some form of partnership working with other agencies which seek to address food poverty and hardship. These vary from formal, strategic level partnerships, for example, the Aberdeen Food bank Partnership, to close working with local agencies such as Citizens Advice Bureaux, Women's Aid and church groups. Four specifically mentioned involvement in local government or NHS-led forums/working groups looking at food poverty and wider poverty issues. Advantages of involvement in partnerships with other agencies include sharing information, exposure to different ways of working, and access to expertise in different fields. The value of this approach was also mentioned in the focus groups; a staff member of a homelessness charity in the North East commented: *"I think the gulf that I have seen is between those at the front line in the food banks and those third sector agencies and statutory services and being able to link that in"*. This issue he suggested, might be addressed through: *"something like a forum but with other sectors involved then that would be incredible to make that [connecting with other services] easier and more effective. A forum would increase people on the ground's awareness"*. Working in partnership with other services was identified as an important way in which an integrated response might be developed, as the manager of an Edinburgh food bank commented:

> " *We've got to set food poverty in the wider context of poverty and what we should be striving towards are the linkages between the agencies to give a holistic service to people in poverty, because many are faced with heat or eat, or the kids new shoes or putting a meal on the table and so on.* "
> (food bank manager, Edinburgh)

The majority of the CAB survey respondents feel either very well or well connected with emergency food aid providers in their area. 18 of the 24 CAB respondents reported working in partnership with local emergency food aid providers. The majority of these partnerships involve joint referral systems and distribution of food bank vouchers by CABs. Two respondents mentioned providing advice sessions within emergency food aid services. Advantages of partnership working between CAB and emergency food aid providers include good communication and understanding of the support which they each offer, resulting in a more coordinated service for clients. One CAB respondent commenting on the advantages of working with emergency food aid providers stated that they, *"feel that we have a safety net available for clients who will at least be able to eat while we try to sort their issues out"*.

Forty percent of survey respondents felt there are particular barriers to effective partnership working between emergency food aid providers and other voluntary and statutory sector organisations. The most common issue raised was that of a lack of understanding on the part of mainstream agencies about the role of the emergency food aid providers, as well as a perceived reluctance to engage, particularly in relation to church-based groups. One respondent commented that: *"lack of trust of each other means that we don't always know what is happening and what services are being provided"*. 46% of respondents felt there were particular services which they would like to have better connections with.

46%
of respondents would like better connections with other services, particularly Citizens Advice/benefits advice.

The most commonly mentioned were Citizens Advice/benefits advice services, while several others said they need better links with all agencies, or that they are aware they have limited connections but do not know which agencies they need to engage with (this was particularly mentioned by newer providers). Two respondents mentioned a need for better connections with substance misuse agencies, two mentioned housing, one a credit union and another domestic violence support

services.

Several survey respondents mentioned the importance of partnership working in relation to helping address the root causes of food poverty and supporting people around a complex range of issues. One specifically mentioned partnership working to raise awareness of the challenges of existing government policies. This theme of the potential for collective advocacy among emergency food aid providers is one which emerged strongly from the focus group discussions.

The manager of an Edinburgh food bank commented on how they have used their experience and knowledge developed through engaging with clients to take evidence to the Council on specific examples of bad practice among providers of bed and breakfast accommodation. Others commented on the need for emergency food aid providers to work together to challenge government policy, as one participant stated: *"it's time that we as independent food banks stood up and said this is the problem. It's for the government and the Council to get it sorted"*. The manager of a voluntary organisation operating a food parcel service in Stirling suggested the potential impact, *"If you had one representative organisation that could be gathering that information from everybody and feeding that back so we're speaking as one voice"*. The need for more campaigning and challenging government on issues of poverty was highlighted by a client interviewed at a soup kitchen in East Ayrshire who stated:

> " *It's a big question about the government, they need to dae mare, they're awfully good at wasting money on things that they don't need…we need to get more of a movement. That's the thing about this country we don't stand up, we should be taking to the streets but we don't do it.* "
> (soup kitchen client, East Ayrshire)

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

8.1 Conclusions

The aim of this study was to improve understanding of the support delivered by emergency food aid providers and to identify better ways for them to connect their clients to mainstream services. The study has delivered on the first aim in providing valuable insight and important information on the workings of the varied emergency food aid landscape in Scotland and its interactions with mainstream services. The findings have identified emotional support, in-formal advocacy and engagement with specialist advisors, as key areas of support beyond the provision of food, which emergency food aid providers currently offer. The study also examined the role of partnership working in efforts to address food poverty and found that partnership working between providers and other services improves access to information and expertise, as well as providing opportunities to develop a more integrated response and build a campaigning voice on wider issues of poverty. The website resource and following recommendations have been developed through analysis of the data deliver against the second aim of the study. It is intended that this research is used by that emergency food aid providers and policy and service developers at local and national level to consider their practices and approaches to tackling the issue of food poverty.

Looking at examples from countries such as Canada (where emergency food aid is a longer established part of the welfare state), and from evidence presented in this and other recent UK studies, there is a real danger that emergency food aid provision may become a permanent feature of the welfare landscape in Scotland. Soup kitchen type services, largely targeted at people experiencing homelessness and provided by churches and other voluntary groups, may have long been an established feature of social support in Scotland. However, it is the recent growth in food banks and the extension of emergency food aid to a wide range of social security recipients and people in work which is of acute concern. It is crucial that any state investment in emergency food aid is focused on ensuring clients do not become dependent on this service, but have improved access to mainstream sources of support. This is particularly important in light of the recently published report by the UK Government's All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom (Forsey, 2014), whose primary proposal in responding to the issue is the creation of a new charitable system – the 'Feeding Britain Network' – focused on the redistribution of food waste. This study has shown that emergency food aid providers themselves feel particular ambivalence about their work and frustration at what they often see as the state

passing responsibility for supporting the most vulnerable onto churches and charities. There is appetite among providers in Scotland to develop a more critical voice and to challenge the root causes of food poverty. Partnership working between emergency food aid providers offers the potential for collective advocacy and campaigning on issues of food poverty.

A preventative approach to food poverty which focuses on decent incomes, access to affordable, nutritious food, and which prioritises the most vulnerable, is required. Ultimately, it is action to increase state benefits, end the punitive sanctions regime, address in-work poverty, raise the minimum wage and promote the living wage, which will have the biggest impact on stemming the growth of food poverty in Scotland. However, in the short term it is important to focus on how emergency food aid can be best used to connect clients to more mainstream forms of support, and also build resistance to the further entrenchment of such provision within the welfare state in Scotland.

This research gathered valuable evidence of clients' experiences of a number of different emergency food aid services. Findings suggest that clients using soup kitchen and community cafe services are likely to use these on a regular basis, relying on them for both food and socialising. It is important to provide a safe, non-judgmental space which creates opportunities for social interaction where people are likely to find out about other services from their peers. Food bank clients interviewed were more likely to highlight feelings of stigma and shame and were forced to use the service due to a recent change in financial circumstances. Sudden loss of income through benefit sanctions or delays was the predominant reason why those interviewed were using food banks. In this crisis context clients felt they had no other choice but turn to food hand outs and that they should feel grateful for whatever they received.

The challenges identified in operating referrals from mainstream statutory and voluntary organisations to emergency food aid providers appear to be symptomatic of the dilemmas many agencies face in negotiating the on-going changes and reductions in social security provisions, and the increasing role of faith and voluntary groups in supporting the most vulnerable. The findings suggest there is a need to improve communication between emergency food aid providers and mainstream services. Staff and volunteers of emergency food aid providers may also require more guidance, support and training on working with mainstream services. In addition, it is important to ensure that any referrals made to a food bank follow a thorough assessment of a client's wider

needs by an appropriate agency and that they are provided the necessary information and support to access other services which can help address the reasons why they are unable to afford food.

Where clients are not already receiving such support and advice, the study found that having specialist advisors present at the emergency food aid service is an effective model in engaging people with wider support services. The research also highlighted that emergency food aid providers often advocate on behalf of clients and that this can be an important way to help them engage with mainstream services in order to address a complex range of issues such as housing and social security benefits. Building relationships with named individuals within other services was identified as crucial in doing this effectively.

The research also suggested that emergency food aid providers struggle to have access to up-to-date, comprehensive information about the most appropriate, locally available support for their clients. Emergency food aid clients highly value the informal emotional support and non-judgmental welcome often offered by staff and volunteers. However specialist training would be required to ensure the advice and support provided was consistently available, appropriate, and of high-quality. Given the informal, voluntary nature of a large number of emergency food aid providers, it is unclear how feasible this would be to achieve. The research suggests that improved partnership working between emergency food aid services and mainstream services is likely to be the most effective way to offer clients more holistic support and ensure they receive all the available assistance to prevent them having to continue to rely on emergency food aid.

8.2 Recommendations

At a national level:

- The Scottish Government should take a strong policy position against the further institutionalisation of emergency food aid within mainstream welfare provision and send clear messages to the UK Government that revision of their current austerity and welfare reform agenda is required in order to reverse this trend. It is crucial that any state investment in emergency food aid is focused on ensuring clients do not become dependent on this service, but have improved access to mainstream sources of support.

- Scottish Government and other funding bodies should extend their investment in supporting the provision of specialist advisors such as Citizens Advice or welfare rights advice advisors, within emergency food aid services (particularly within food banks as their clients are commonly affected by benefits delays and sanctions).

The important role played by soup kitchen type services should be recognised in social justice policy, not only in providing food, but also in reducing social isolation among some of Scotland's most vulnerable citizens.

- The various roles played by the range of community café and other community food activities in reducing isolation and improving health and wellbeing should also be recognised in social justice policy. Support for emergency food aid provision in these contexts should not detract from their wider community development purposes.

- Scottish Government investment in existing local infrastructures – such as the Third Sector Interfaces should reflect the need to improve the availability of up-to-date information on the range of both statutory and voluntary services. This would improve emergency food aid providers' knowledge of, and ability to connect with, other services at a local level.

- Creating opportunities at both a national and local level for emergency food aid providers to network and share experiences offers the potential for the development of collective advocacy and campaigning on food poverty, and also for identifying longer-term solutions. Such events could also help connect these groups and organisations with wider anti-poverty work and campaigns.

At a local level:

- Local government and third sector infrastructures should support opportunities for networking and information sharing at a local level between emergency food aid providers and mainstream services. This would help improve collaborative working to address food, and wider poverty issues, as well as ensuring that clients receive a holistic service and are effectively connected into existing support available to them.

- Councils should ensure that all emergency food aid providers have information on how the Scottish Welfare Fund operates in their area.

- Investment from local government is also required to support the colocation of services and increase the availability of specialist advisors within emergency food aid services.

- Local anti-poverty and financial inclusion strategies should include food poverty as a priority issue and those involved in delivering and receiving emergency food aid should be included in the development and implementation of such strategies.

At an organisational level:

- Models of emergency food aid provision which are client-centred and focused on providing non-judgemental and holistic support should be encouraged as best practice.

- It is important that emergency food aid providers are able to prioritise creating opportunities for reducing social isolation, building community relationships, and empowering individuals to access the services and support they are entitled to.

- Providing staff and volunteers of emergency food aid services with basic training in poverty awareness, welfare rights, and substance misuse issues in particular should be encouraged as best practice. However this should not be at the expense of investment in specialist advice as described above.

- Advocacy and mentoring training, as well as funding to provide resources such as telephones for use by or on behalf of clients attending the emergency food aid service, would help staff/volunteers to better provide such support, and to connect clients to the services and support they require.

- Emergency food aid providers should aim to work together at a local and national level to identify good practice, and importantly to focus attention on the structural drivers of food poverty and look to develop a more sustainable response.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

Initial Fieldwork

Initial fieldwork for this project involved meetings with key stakeholders including the Policy Manager at Citizens Advice Scotland, the lead researcher on the 'Overview of Food Aid Provision in Scotland' report, the Scottish Welfare Fund Development Manager, council staff responsible for food poverty strategies in two different local authorities, researchers at Faith in Community Scotland, coordinators of a community food project in South Lanarkshire, and volunteer managers of two different food banks in Glasgow. The researcher also accompanied Trussell Trust staff on visits to five foodbanks in their network across the Highlands. Field notes from these meetings and discussions were analysed alongside the data from the more structured elements of the research project. This initial scoping work allowed opportunities to raise awareness of the study, build contacts and, importantly, gain a better understanding of the key issues currently facing emergency food aid providers and also those working at a local, national and strategic level to respond to the growth in food poverty. This work was also crucial in helping identify participants and informing the lines of inquiry for the project's main data gathering activities.

On-line Survey

An online survey was developed using Survey Monkey and piloted with three emergency food aid providers. The survey collected data on the type and location of emergency food aid providers, the different services they provide, the nature of their onward referral and sign-posting processes, the partnerships which exist between them and those they have with other services. Whilst recognising that the landscape of emergency food aid provision in Scotland is complex and highly dynamic, the aim was to identify and include in the sample as many of those providing emergency food aid in Scotland as possible. A list of 167 providers was compiled from a number of existing lists including those involved in Sosenko et al.'s 2013 scoping study and the Trussell Trust's Foodbank network in Scotland, as well as a number of other databases held at local authority level – many of which were provided by local CVS/third sector interfaces who were all contacted for information to help with this initial mapping. Therefore the sample included all services recognised in Scotland as offering some form of free food – ranging from informal community café drop-ins, to the more structured Trussell Trust Foodbank franchises.

While the researcher is confident that the list of emergency food aid providers in Scotland is largely comprehensive, given the time restrictions of this study, the informal nature of many providers, and that new emergency food aid initiatives are emerging regularly, there will certainly be providers who were not identified. 81 responses were received, giving the survey a response rate of 49%.

A version of the survey was also sent via Citizens Advice Scotland to all 61 Citizens Advice Bureaux in Scotland. The rationale for gathering this data was that during the initial scoping fieldwork and literature review stages it was recognised that the relationships between emergency food aid providers and CABx are important in supporting people in crisis, and that at a local level different approaches have been taken to develop these relationships. The survey of CABx collected data on the referrals to and from emergency food aid providers, the partnership working which exists, and other work developed by CABx to address food poverty. 24 responses to this survey were received, giving it a response rate of 39%.

Focus Groups

A total of 43 participants took part in two focus group sessions held in September 2014. Participants were selected from within the survey sample and many were identified from contacts made in the initial scoping fieldwork. The first session in Rutherglen was attended by 31 participants. This included 20 emergency food aid providers, as well as representatives from local authority tackling poverty teams, a housing association, a homelessness charity, and 4 different community food projects. Participants came from Glasgow, North and South Lanarkshire, West Dunbartonshire, Edinburgh, West Lothian, Stirling and Clackmannanshire. Some also represented national organisations. The session involved three simultaneous focus group discussions in different break-out rooms held for 1.5 hours with a short break. Each group of 10 or 11 was seated round a table and lead by a facilitator who guided the discussions and took notes. Each session was also voice recorded. In the first half of the session each group selected one of three short vignettes and the facilitator guided participants through a framework of questions, exploring how the individual described might be supported. The second half involved further guided discussion focused on how food aid providers connect clients to other services, and the challenges and barriers involved in providing a more holistic, coordinated service.

A further focus group was held in Aberdeen. 12 participants attended including representatives from 7 different emergency food aid projects, 2 charities which support vulnerable people and a local authority tackling poverty coordinator. Participants came from Aberdeen, Aberdeenshire, Dundee and Moray. The session followed the same format at that held in Rutherglen. The two locations were chosen as accessible centres for participants based in the Central Belt and North East to attend. The aim was to gain as diverse a range of perspectives as possible within the limitations of a study of this scale.

Client interviews

A total of 14 semi-structured interviews were carried out with recipients of emergency food aid. Six were held with participants and clients of two different services providing free food in Glasgow. Time was spent at the two services on a weekly basis getting to know their ways of working and chatting informally with staff, volunteers and participants. Individuals were then approached and asked if they would like to take part in an interview. Interviews

were held on site at the services in private rooms away from the main food serving areas. Interview schedules were adapted slightly to be appropriate for the different projects. Questions were focused on clients' experiences of the projects, reasons for attending, experiences of signposting and onward referrals, and experiences of other emergency food aid services. A similar recruitment process was also used for engaging interviewees from a food bank and also a drop-in service providing hot drinks and sandwiches, and perishable foods to take away, both in Kilmarnock. Four clients were interviewed at the food bank, and a further four at the drop-in. Data was analysed alongside that from other fieldwork, and also written up as individual case studies in order to exemplify the client's experience. It is recognised that due to the small sample size, the views gathered cannot be said to be representative of those of others accessing emergency food aid in similar or different contexts. However, through attending these services regularly and conducting detailed interviews with individual clients, an in-depth understanding of these particular cases was developed which provide an important perspective on the issues being explored and help illuminate key themes identified elsewhere in the data.

Appendix 2:
Profile of emergency food aid providers visited by fieldwork

Type of organisation	Type of food aid	Type of non–food services provided	Project description	Location	Data gathered
Community food/health project	Community café	External advice service onsite Links to org's other services Volunteering opportunities	Community growing project serving free meal once a week with occasional visits from CAB advisors. Also run cooking classes.	Glasgow	3 Visits 2 Client Interviews
Independent food aid provider	Soup kitchen and food parcels	Informal emotional support	Independent charity based on Christian principles, providing hot meals twice a week predominantly to people experiencing homelessness. Also have food parcel service.	Glasgow	4 Visits 4 Client Interviews
Other voluntary organisation	Food parcels (Trussell Trust)	Adhoc signposting to other services. Links into organisation's other services Volunteering opportunities	Food bank located within social enterprise project providing recycled furniture and training and volunteering opportunities.	East ayrshire	2 Visits 4 Client Interviews
Faith Group	Soup kitchen	External services onsite	Church–run drop-in, cold food mainly to homeless. CAB, doctors, and other drop-in on site.	East ayrshire	1 Visits 4 Client Interviews

Appendix 3:
Location of Survey Respondents by Local Authority Area

Local Authority	Number of Respondents
Glasgow	14
Edinburgh	13
Fife	8
North Lanarkshire	7
Aberdeen	7
Highland	4
Dundee	3
Aberdeenshire	3
West Lothian	3
South Lanarkshire	3
Midlothian	3
East Lothian	3
Clackmannanshire	3
Dumfries and Galloway	3
Inverclyde	3
Angus	2
North Ayrshire	2
Renfrewshire	2
Moray	2
East Ayrshire	1
East Renfrewshire	1
Argyll and Bute	1
Perth and Kinross	1
Stirling	1
Orkney	1
Scottish Borders	1
South Ayrshire	1
West Dunbartonshire	1
East Dunbartonshire	1
Shetland	1
Eilean Siar	0
Falkirk	0

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