

# Food, Families, Futures

Making positive change  
happen alongside families

*A practical resource for strategic leads*

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## Thank you

Many thanks to all of our partners over the past five years. You have shared your enthusiasm, frustrations and learning so readily.

Thank you especially to our partners in West Dunbartonshire, Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire for liaising at such a challenging time in spring 2020.



## Get in touch

We are always keen to find out what you think, so please do get in touch to let us know your opinions on this resource, and how useful it has been.

We'd also be grateful if you were able to share examples of your work – what worked, and what didn't.

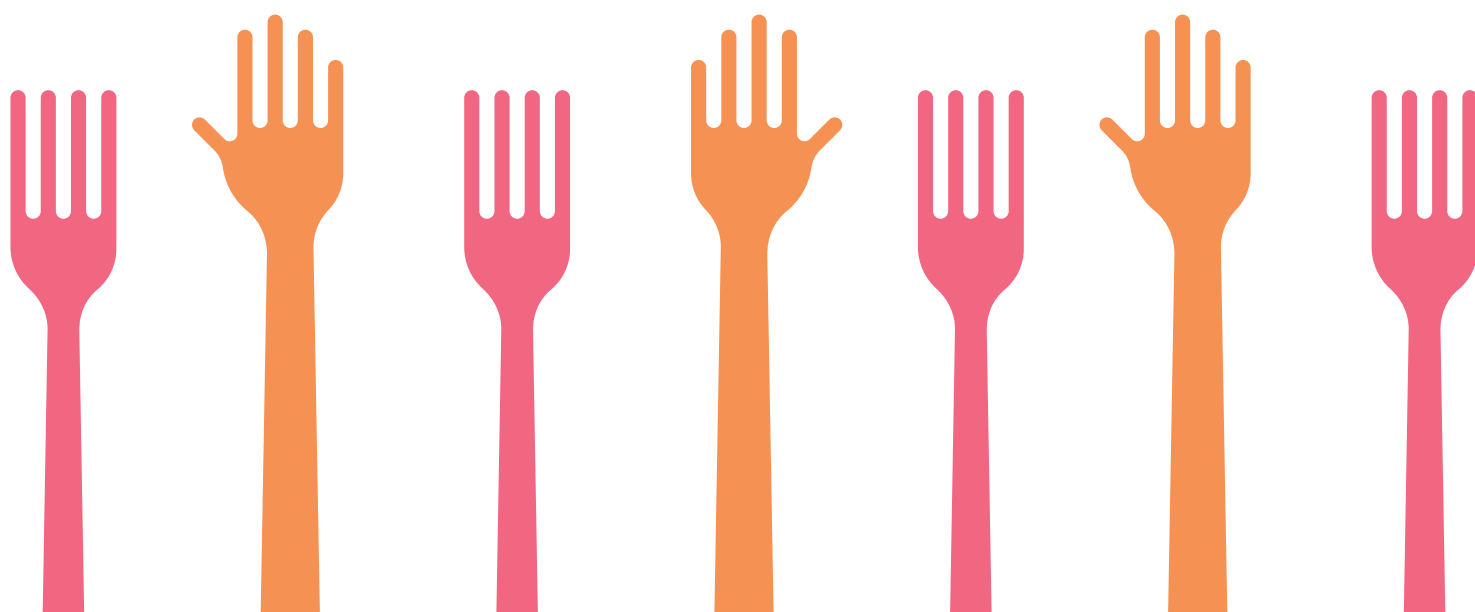
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Please consider sharing this advice through your social media: tag us in your posts. Our Twitter handle is **@cisweb**.

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# Children in Scotland



Giving all children in Scotland an equal chance to flourish is at the heart of everything we do.

By bringing together a network of people working with and for children, alongside children and young people themselves, we offer a broad, balanced and independent voice. We create solutions, provide support and develop positive change across all areas affecting children in Scotland.

We do this by listening, gathering evidence, and applying and sharing our learning, while always working to uphold children's rights. Our range of knowledge and expertise means we can provide trusted support on issues as diverse as the people we work with and the varied lives of children and families in Scotland.

## Food, Families, Futures



### Background

Food, Families, Futures is Children in Scotland's innovative and multi award-winning project addressing the major social issue of food poverty and its links with wellbeing, learning and attainment.

It was developed in 2015, focusing on working with communities experiencing multiple deprivation in Glasgow, West Dunbartonshire, Perthshire, North Ayrshire, East Lothian, Clackmannanshire and Stirlingshire.

The programme runs with support from the major UK food supplier Brakes (through its independent charity, Meals & More) with additional funding over the past five years from the People's Postcode Lottery, Asda, the Gannochy Trust, Forteviot Charitable Trust, Anton Jurgens, Glasgow Flight Path, The Hugh Fraser Foundation and Cash For Kids. In the first phase of the project Business in the Community Scotland was also our charity partner.

Through our Food, Families, Futures programme, Children in Scotland is putting policy into practice. Our role is to maintain a careful balance of strategic and delivery workstreams with a focus on identifying and developing partnerships, working with professionals and engaging with children and families, and the monitoring and evaluation of the clubs. We bring community partners together and respond to local needs and strengths.

## Aims

The programme aims to make a meaningful difference to people's lives by meeting immediate need and tackling food insecurity and the wider needs of additional skills/training for children and parents, such as food preparation and food handling and hygiene. This aims to improve the confidence, learning and attainment of children and increase their future opportunities.

The main aims of Food, Families, Futures are:

- To improve the health and wellbeing of children, young people and families
- To create a supportive environment for parents/carers to bond, listen and better engage with their children's learning
- To provide the opportunity for young people and adult members of families to gain qualifications and certification in subjects related to the local economy
- To engage the wider community (i.e. local organisations, businesses and local groups) to support activities which develop life skills, knowledge and potential employment routes for people
- To make better use of community assets outwith school/term hours and foster stronger relationships within the communities in such a way that the programme continues after year one.

## Impact

Food, Families, Futures has heard from children, families, practitioners and partners on the positive impact this provision can have.

This includes:

- Significantly reduced costs of feeding a family and finding activities to do over the six or seven weeks of the summer holidays

*"It provided a free activity for us which was important this summer because I was not working and sourcing free activities is actually quite difficult!"*

- Easing transition of children to school due to the informal and welcoming environment of activity and food clubs

- Increased social contact between adults and wider families, including intergenerational contacts – developing a sense of the community from coming together

*“It brings the community together.”*

- Children gaining greater confidence and self-esteem, feeling fitter and happier as a result of enjoying activities and eating healthy meals

*“I’ve made some new friends.”*

- Adults have an increased awareness of local and national services available
- We were pleased to support Northumbria University’s holiday learning loss study and the positive impact food and activities could have on this.

From a strategic point of view, positive impacts can include:

- New partnerships are formed (education, community learning, health, third sector, industry, funders)
- Venues being used well as a community resource, including schools with kitchens
- Building social capital within family support projects is achieved, including confidence and opportunities for learning among children and adults
- Fresh healthy food into the heart of communities that are starved of outlets many other communities enjoy, contributing to tackling health inequalities.

## Aim of this resource



Children in Scotland has a unique strategic position in this national programme. We have been engaging with local authorities to learn from them and share good practice. We want to share our learning about the successes and challenges our projects and clubs have faced over the past five years, in order to support children and families’ health and wellbeing across Scotland and beyond.

We have developed a **handbook**, a practical guide to planning, establishing and delivering a community-based club with the aim of addressing a variety of issues affecting children and families.

This resource, however, is taking a more strategic focus, providing information to help those in a strategic lead role, perhaps at local authority level. It disseminates reflections and learning from our Food, Families, Futures partners who hold these more strategic roles.

We know that actions taken to eradicate food insecurity have the power to change habits, broaden experience and challenge the health inequalities that allow it to be 'normal'. We hope this resource will support those with the commitment and responsibility to tackle these inequalities and improve health outcomes for children and families living in Scotland.

## The national strategic context



Establishing family support to tackle food insecurity, and ensuring this is done with dignity, respect and commitment, will assist local authorities and the local children's services planning partners to meet the obligations placed upon them by national legislation and planning frameworks.

In particular, Children in Scotland and partners suggest particular reference to the following:

The **Sustainable Development Goals** provide a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity for people and the planet, now and in the future. There are 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which are an urgent call for action by all countries. They recognise that ending poverty must go hand-in-hand with strategies that improve health and education and reduce inequality. For example, number 2, 'Zero Hunger', states we must 'End hunger, achieve food security and adequate nutrition for all, and promote sustainable agriculture'. By 2030, we should aim to end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, the Scottish Government launched a refreshed **National Performance Framework** (NPF) with the Sustainable Development Goals embedded throughout. The NPF and the Goals share the same aims, and it is viewed as Scotland's way to localise and implement the Goals. This includes national outcomes that poverty is tackled by sharing opportunities; people are healthy and active; and securing children's wellbeing.



<sup>1</sup> <https://learningforsustainabilityscotland.org/2014/06/sustainable-development-goals-zero-draft-published/>

The Scottish Government and COSLA have agreed six **Public Health Priorities**. These are intended to support national and local partners across Scotland to work together to improve healthy life expectancy and reduce health inequalities in our communities. They include Priority 6: a Scotland where we eat well. To improve Scotland's health and wellbeing we need to work together to shift our focus to preventing ill health, reducing inequalities and working more effectively in partnership.

The **Christie Commission** (2011) states that reforms to public services must empower individuals and communities; integrate provision; prevent negative outcomes for people and communities, and become more efficient.

The **Community Empowerment Act** (2015), places an obligation on local authorities to participate with communities in the planning process and that they must do so with a view to reducing inequalities.

The **Child Poverty Act** places a responsibility on local authorities and health boards to report on and publish actions taken to reduce child poverty.

The Food, Families Futures programme urges children's services partnerships to recognise that projects and clubs that are set up in line with the principles exemplified in the programme, are a significant and effective contribution to tackling food insecurity, particularly during school holidays. For children's services partnerships this approach is not solely a means of tackling child poverty but also in reshaping public services as argued by the Christie Commission.

## Relevant strategic guidance and documents



Within the strategic context proposed above, the following guidance is immensely helpful for children's services partnerships which intend to tackle food insecurity. Critically, each of these resources will also help with planning for the forthcoming legislation on **Incorporation of the UNCRC**.

The **Dignity: Ending Hunger Together** report sets out evidence and recommendations from the work of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty, including how the income of people living in food insecurity can be increased, the quality of food provision can be improved, and more transformative community food models can be established.



The **Cost Of the School Holiday** report gauges the extent and nature of the cost of school holidays for families in the UK with low income and the effects holidays have on children's educational attainment.

**Setting the Table** is nutritional guidance and food standards for early years childcare providers in Scotland. The aim is to ensure that children under five are offered healthy and nutritious meals, snacks and drinks.

**Filling the Holiday Gap** offers guiding points for organisations providing community holiday time meals for children.

**Menu for Change** sees Oxfam Scotland, the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, Nourish Scotland and The Poverty Alliance in partnership, aiming to evolve the emergency response to food insecurity in Scotland, whilst helping to tackle the underlying drivers.

**Children in Scotland's** partner **Media Education** has produced a number of films capturing the fun had at the summer clubs and illustrating the benefits to all stakeholders. All films are available by going to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and searching for FutureFoodScot.

One film was produced in 2016 and showed what can be achieved by working in partnership. This was used to promote the clubs in a variety of ways and helped with the significant expansion of the project in 2017.

The **2017 film** involves children, families and practitioners (including community chefs) sharing their feelings, opinions and experiences of the clubs. It captures the positive impact the clubs have had across communities, especially for children and families.

The following areas have been identified by Strategic Leads as essential to the success of developing and delivering projects and clubs that support community health.



An arts and crafts activity in a Fife summer club ▲

# Leadership



Each organisation that is a member of the local Children's Services Partnership will have the responsibility to create an environment where all children and young people are protected from hunger and poor nutrition and can have access to food in a dignified and non-stigmatising fashion.

Strategic Leads tell us that backing for each organisation at a high level within local authorities is very important, such as support from elected members. Working within this partnership the following features need to be developed:

- A named person or small group with authority to lead the work and holding responsibility for its implementation.
- A specific policy or strategy endorsed by the partnership that describes the progress to be achieved over specific timescales together with reporting arrangements.
- Funding and other resources identified from the outset that are long-term – i.e. over a number of years.
- Systems and practices developed and established that support this work to run as smoothly as possible for all involved. For example, a shared procurement system, meaning a variety of organisations and partners can work together more easily to support children and families.

We have often heard from Strategic Leads how important a 'can do' attitude is to overcome the challenges this work can face. Many felt that this work involved pushing organisational norms and boundaries. Lead people/groups described their approach as 'Proceed until cautioned to stop' or 'It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.' We need to move to a leadership approach that encourages innovation where it clearly is intended to deliver a common and shared purpose – in this case tackling food insecurity in ways that are respectful and effective in supporting families.



## ○ Funding

Longer-term statutory funding will give a degree of security and stability to plan for more enduring and impactful work. However, it was recognised by each statutory partner how valuable third sector organisations were in securing additional funding from a range of sources, together with their effective approaches at working alongside local families. This element should not be lost.

## Partnership working



Each of the areas we worked in recognised that the work had to be planned and delivered in partnership – and each acknowledged it had been very challenging initially. Collaboration needs to be worked through constructively and transparently because it was agreed by all that partnership brings a range of opportunities and strengths, offering a richer experience for the children, families and community as a whole.

What is crucial is that partners involved in the project share core values around:

- The health and wellbeing of children (physical, mental, emotional)
- The essential role of food and activity in maintaining and developing the above
- The essential role of children and parental engagement throughout the project
- Schools/venues (and where appropriate, their kitchens) as a central community resource.

Once the principles of the project are agreed there are of course practical considerations that every partnership must discuss. These are around roles and responsibilities of development, delivery, monitoring and evaluation. Good communication between partners supports the success, including regular contact, whether through meetings or other methods. This is true throughout the project, from planning to evaluation and reporting stages.

Successful partnerships help ameliorate the challenges that can be experienced when establishing projects and clubs, such as needing to use venues with kitchens. This is a common challenge across local authorities but, by working with catering partners and facilities management, these challenges can be kept to a minimum.

*“Nothing for us, without us!”*

Local clubs or projects should not be established without getting families, children and young people involved in the planning, delivery and ongoing review. This is critical to immediate and long-term success. The precise arrangements should vary in line with identifying the most effective routes.

## Local flexibility



It is essential that the partners involved know the needs and strengths of the local area. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate and will fail. There can be good practical reasons for all projects or clubs across an area to have the same food, start times, activities etc. Each of our lead partners acknowledged that the most successful projects are those developed with and by local people who understand local needs and strengths. As one participant said, *“We are constantly building on awareness and understanding of families.”*

Each local area and project will have similar aims, outputs and outcomes. The foundations of each include family engagement, food, skills, choices, confidence and responsibility. There will also be core procedures, such as Child Protection guidelines that will be common to all projects but can be built on to suit local needs.

Within the Food, Families, Futures projects and clubs Strategic Leads and local partners have developed the skills of individuals to enable local projects to be owned and organised by local people because *“It has to work in each setting.”*

## Participation and engagement



One of Children in Scotland's key strategic priorities is to champion the participation and inclusion of children and young people. In line with how participation is described by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, our goal is to engage children and young people in meaningful, ongoing dialogue and to enable them to have effective and fulfilling participation. Children and young people should be actively listened to, treated fairly and have their opinions respected and taken seriously.

Also within communities, establishing a trusting relationship is the essential starting point.

Strategic Leads told us: *"It needs to come from the families"* because *"It helped make it a success."* Ways of establishing trusting relationships have come from developing the activities, the timetable and the menus together, cooking and eating together, reviewing and changing the programme – all as a partnership. Projects and clubs must be *"For families, with families"*.

A national example of children's experiences shaping policy and implementation is the **Children's Future Food Inquiry** which highlights the experiences of children and young people regarding many aspects of food. The 15 Young Food Ambassadors have developed a Children's #Right2Food Charter calling for:



- A healthy lunch guarantee
- The healthy food minimum
- The children's food watchdog
- Health before profits
- Stop the stigma

The website and publications are very useful strategic resources.

Another helpful resource is Children in Scotland's **Principles and Guidelines** to meaningful participation with children and young people, which outlines three key stages of working with children and young people:

1. Planning and coordination
2. Delivery
3. Reporting, evaluation and next steps



## Evaluation



Evaluation is essential, whether it is on the ground at the projects and clubs or more widely across the local authority. It is the only way we can assess whether aims have been met, outcomes have been delivered and impact on children and families' lives measured. Strategic Leads acknowledge *"This is really key" because "Feedback and evaluation has meant development"*.

Evaluation can include statistics of children and families accessing clubs and projects, but it should also involve rich qualitative data, capturing people's experience. However, this must be done ethically, anonymously and with informed consent from those involved. (Please see our [Principles and Guidelines](#).)

Through evaluation and case studies, a body of evidence is created which can help to shape plans and actions and contribute to the ambitions of the Scottish Government in improving the lives and life chances of the population.

## Non-stigmatising



There has been a lot of learning in recent years about the stigma linked to poverty and food insecurity. There are popularly held stereotypes and misconceptions around who experiences poverty-related issues and why. These are unhelpful and show a complete lack of understanding of the experience of families across Scotland.

Strategic Leads recognise the importance of supporting staff and volunteers' knowledge and understanding of poverty-related issues impacting on local people. Some local authorities have specifically trained staff to carry out this training. Others access national support, such as that from [The Joseph Rowntree Foundation](#).

In our [25 Calls Campaign](#) Children in Scotland's [Call #1](#) states: *'Change the language of poverty: young people deserve dignity, not stigma and*

*discrimination*'. We would recommend reading what young people have told us about their own experience and what they would like to change.

This impacts on how families are invited to attend projects and clubs and how the good news is shared across the media. It must be a universal offer, open to all, with partners offering support and encouragement to families they know are experiencing the impact of poverty and deprivation.

## Inclusion



As with poverty-related issues, Strategic Leads recognise the importance of understanding children and families' additional support needs. If the clubs and projects are to be a universal offer, this must include those who experience additional support needs. Understanding, training and planning are essential in avoiding any barriers for children and families to take part and access opportunities. Ensuring those who experience ASN have their voices and experiences heard in the planning and delivery of the projects and clubs is essential.

If you are thinking of establishing a club that fulfils these aims, we hope you have found this advice helpful.



▲ Salad items to be paired with hot food being prepared in a West Dunbartonshire summer club

# Food, Families, Futures

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**Elaine Kerridge**

June 2020