

# SUBMISSION FROM COMMUNITY FOOD INITIATIVES NORTH EAST

February 2014

## Evidence for the Scottish Parliament



### Background

In December 2012, as a response to the rising numbers of Food Banks in the City of Aberdeen, CFINE and others, for example, Cash In Your Pocket and Instant Neighbour, agreed there needed to be coordination and coherence to ensure the best service was provided to the most people in need as possible. A meeting was convened and it was agreed to form a Food Bank Partnership Aberdeen. It was also agreed that CFINE would act as lead partner.

The Partnership successfully applied to the Fairer Scotland (now Aberdeen) Fund to support the development of an infrastructure behind the Food Banks and to ensure that every effort was made to realise quantities of produce from food producers and retailers and that this would be distributed fairly, effectively and efficiently.

### Meeting Emergency Need - Building Resilience

As well as providing emergency food, all partners are committed to promoting employment, signposting to money advice, debt management and household budgeting services, and other sources of support to develop resilience and help people to move on and out of poverty, in particular their dependence on food banks.

### Partnership Aims

The main aim of the Partnership is not to create dependency on food banks, but to move people – where appropriate – into employment with the help of a range of supporting services. A second aim is to work with food suppliers and retailers to reduce the amount going to landfill (reduction in carbon emissions) and to redistribute to those in most need.

The Partnership has developed a Strategy, Memorandum of Understanding and an Information Sharing Protocol which partners signed on October 7th 2013. See [www.foodbankpartnershipaberdeen.org.uk](http://www.foodbankpartnershipaberdeen.org.uk)

### Food Drives

The Food Banks Partnership Aberdeen organises food drives with the help of the public, private and Third sectors. The food donated is distributed through existing food banks and other community outlets.

## **CFINE**

CFINE ([www.cfine.org](http://www.cfine.org)) is a local Social Enterprise which has been a wholesale and retail supplier of fruit, veg and healthy snacks to disadvantaged and vulnerable communities since 1996, developing a volunteer network, tackling food poverty, building resilience and raising awareness, and is the local distributor for the national FareShare scheme. Food donated by FareShare is incorporated within the Food Banks Partnership and distributed locally to partner organizations like Aberdeen Cyrenians and Instant Neighbour, through other food banks and community outlets and augments what is collected locally.

## **Partnership Membership**

Currently, Food Banks Partnership Aberdeen has a range of partners and associates including: CFINE; Instant Neighbour Trust; Aberdeen Cyrenians; Integrate; Torry St Fitticks Church; Apex; Bethany Christian Trust; Salvation Army; Middlefield Community Project; Fersands and Fountain Community Work Project; Printfield Community Project; Tilly flat; Cash in Your Pocket Partnership; Grampian Housing Association SMART project; North East Scotland Credit Union; and Aberdeen City Council – Social Work, Housing. However, regrettably, some food banks in the City are not part of the Partnership ie Trussell Trust, Somebody Cares, various Churches.

## **Local Authority Support**

Aberdeen City Council supports the Food Banks at CFINE and Instant Neighbour by offering a Food Bank card (alongside vouchers for ASDA or Morrisons), so that beneficiaries of the Scottish Welfare Fund can access the Food Bank for their SWF grant allocation. The scheme supported by The Council which provides Accord Card (smart card) technology to monitor the use of the scheme. It is hoped that the Social Work service within the Council will soon come on board with the smart card technology for Section 12 money given to clients for food.

The Council also supported in 2013/14 the Food Banks Partnership Aberdeen by a £52,800 grant from the Fairer Aberdeen Board to develop the partnership and the infrastructure to support the partnership. It is anticipated that this investment will be maintained in 2014/15.

## **Food Donations**

CFINE is also realizing quantities of food from major retailers for distribution through the Food Bank network. This is food that is still fit for consumption, but would otherwise go to landfill. Additionally, as stated above, corporate are supporting the Partnership with food drives as have a number of members of the public.

## **Statistical Snapshot**

Across the Food Banks Partnership Aberdeen:

<b>Detail</b>	<b>April - Sept</b>	<b>Oct - Dec</b>	<b>TOTAL for 9 months</b>
<b>Tonnage of food</b>	27	31.6	<b>58.6</b>
<b>Number of</b>	2524	3000	<b>5524</b>

<b>food parcels</b>			
<b>Number of beneficiaries</b>	1514	1956 (taking into account a 40% return rate from partners) (3000)	<b>3470</b> (up to 4470)
<b>Referrals to other agencies</b>	606	1200	<b>1800</b>

### Issues

- **Keeping up with growing demand.** Food Banks are reliant on donations and so are subject to fluctuations in amount of food available to give away.
- **Role of (Government Policy) in increasing demand.** More people are coming to food banks as they are subject to delays in payment of benefit, sanctions by Job Centre Plus, have exhausted their savings to pay the bedroom tax, have exhausted their savings to keep financially afloat, awaiting the outcome of benefit appeals, have debt, are in debt to payday loan companies and so on.

### CFINE Food Bank

Month	No of people requesting a food parcel	Number of self referrals
Oct 13	62	5
Nov 13	101	8
Dec 13	137	19
Jan 14	131	40
Feb 14 (first 2 wks)	47	10

N.B. The figures above include the people in receipt of a Scottish Welfare Fund Grant.

- **Referrals coming from eg Social Work, Drug and Alcohol Services, NHS, Housing** for food parcels without any funding being made available to the Food Bank. So effectively, for example, Social Work saves on its Section 12 fund by diverting their most vulnerable to the Food Bank.
- **More people are self referring** – particularly beginning to see those in work requiring assistance. See table above.
- **Increasing numbers of Food Banks starting up.** This is a concern as, unless there is a Partnership where basic standards are agreed and monitoring takes place of beneficiaries, the system is subject to abuse. We know this, but are limited in what we can do to mitigate.
- **Volunteer numbers** – CFINE has seen large increase in those interested in volunteering, mainly due to the promotion of the food bank. Number rose from 15 in November to 26 in January. This is excellent, supporting volunteers which results in improved health and well-being and increased employability is a key CFINE goal but CFINE is committed to providing a

quality experience which takes time and energy from Development staff who are under immense pressure.

- **Philosophical dilemma** between meeting emergency need (which is essential) but simply creating dependency where nothing changes, dignity eroded etc.
- **Zero Waste Scotland Act** – Food Banks are wary about accepting volumes of surplus chilled food as there is a worry about the cost of disposal if the food is not distributed timeously as the Zero Waste Scotland Act demands the disposal has to be paid for. An exception for Food Banks would be welcome and would help to ease the concern of a payment for disposal thus allowing Food Banks to realize quantities of food from, for example, retailers.



## Beneficiaries' Stories

Here are 3 case studies, which are typical for the Food Bank

**Ethel** is in her late 50s, has worked all her life, and looked after her husband who was on benefit due to illness. The company she worked for closed down and her husband died. She used savings for her husband's funeral and to pay the bedroom tax. She was faced with a huge reduction in income as she no longer had her husband's contribution to the household and the bills were the same eg rent etc. She was on ESA herself, but following a medical, she was moved to JSA (considerably less). The change over of benefit took approx 6 weeks and during that time, she exhausted all her savings and literally had nothing.

She cannot read or write, which limits the jobs she can apply for. In discussion she related that when she was a child she had looked after her mother (who had brain tumours), and her siblings, and that school had 'passed her by'. The Scottish Welfare Fund did help with a crises grant for food (£18) and gas/electricity (£40). However this could not sustain her for long and she has been receiving food parcels as a short term measure until her benefit is paid. In the interim, The Food Bank has referred Ethel to the Job Parents project where she gets individualised support with a view to returning to work, which is all she wants to do.

**Bob** is in his late 40s, and moved to Aberdeen from Coventry to get work. He came in his car and moved into a hostel at his own expense. He did secure short term work over Christmas, but ended up with zero hours contracts. He can no longer pay for the hostel so he left. His is considered to have made himself 'intentionally homeless' so no help is available from the local Council and he is now sleeping in his

car. The private rented sector in the City is expensive and competitive so it will be extremely difficult for him to get somewhere to live. The Food Bank worked with Jobcentre Plus to help Bob get a job and secure accommodation. He is now working part time and is looking for accommodation. The Food Bank is helping by letting him use the shower facility so Bob can remain in work.

**Ian** is in his early 30s. He was injured in an accident on an oil rig and spent a month in hospital recovering. He lost part of his right hand as a result of the accident and had to learn to walk again, and by his own omission, now has mental health problems as a result. He was receiving Industrial Injury Benefit and ESA. However, following a review, he was transferred to JSA and the Industrial Injuries Benefit was stopped. Ian appealed and won his appeal on Oct 2013. Due to a backlog in processing, his benefits have not been reinstated and he is currently receiving a reduced amount of JSA. He is very careful with his money and eg only uses the minimum amount of energy, only receives incoming calls on his phone and once those bills are paid has £12 a week to live on.



**Dave Simmers**  
**Chief Executive**  
**Community Food Initiatives North East**  
**February 2014**