

Cash-first in action: Kingsway Community Connections

www.kingswaycc.org

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Kingsway Community Connections is a small community development charity in Scotstoun in the North-West **of Glasgow**.

Their vision is for a Proud, Capable and Confident multi-cultural community and **their mission** is to build social capital within the community.

They work alongside the community in a range of ways to increase people's **confidence, esteem, sense of connectedness** and **belonging**. **Personal Growth** and **Wellness** is reflected in all aspects of KCC's programme to encourage positive, sustainable change.

They believe that this is the most effective contribution that they can make to addressing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing within the community. ·

Across their work they strive to:

**“ promote dignity
and choice for all**



KCC deliver a range of activities, groups, services and events.

This includes a free, impartial and confidential welfare advice and advocacy support service, assisting residents with a wide range of issues including; health, debt, housing, benefits, employment and education.

Their recent **Community Food Initiatives** include:

- Community kitchen
- Lunch Club and Coffee Morning
- Breakfast Club
- Food growing
- Free hot food for groups, such as their Youth Group
- Free hot lunches
- Free hot food at events such as the Harvest Festival

Most of our food based work involves either signposting, providing vouchers or providing daily meals.



Overview of current cash-first approaches

Offered alongside KCC's community development programme, their **cash-first approaches** are:

- **welfare advice** via a dedicated Welfare Advice and Support Worker
- supporting people to **access wider services**
- **providing referrals** to the food bank and vouchers to use in the pantry.

Cash-first is an essential way to give people dignity and choice.



Figure 1 below shows KCC's cash-first approach in action.




Challenges

Their reported **key challenges**:


- **a busy welfare and advice service** as people continue to require this support regularly
- **community engagement challenges**: if someone is having to choose between 'heating or eating' then they are less likely to have the capability to engage in other activities and access opportunities
- **having access to up to date resources** on cash-first supports and other local provision for frontline staff
- **staff under pressure to fulfil multiple roles** to ensure people access the support and advice that they require
- **having to stop some of their community food activities** due to lack of funding: *"Without the draw of a free lunch, it's another barrier to making that [cash-first supports] happen".*
- **lack of multi-year funding** across all KCC delivery meaning many posts and activities have only a year or two of costs currently covered



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***We are at the forefront -
but we should be properly
funded and equipped to be
able to respond to the
challenges of food
insecurity.***



Positives

Implementing these cash-first approaches within KCC has been found to have positives such as:

- **Having hot food in the main space has created more opportunities for connections.** For example, KCC often see people who don't know each other chatting while having lunch together. Whether this is just a passing conversation, or it becomes a lasting friendship, it creates a more welcoming and participative environment.
- **While there can be a stigma and discriminatory attitudes of 'us' and 'them' attached to accessing a food bank,** having a free hot lunch for all community members goes some way to alleviating this by making it universal. This is described as 'obviously' limited if community members have food preferences or dietary requirements that are not accommodated by the lunch.
- **By taking a Personal Growth & Wellness approach,** KCC feel much better equipped to support community members accessing the Welfare Advice Service with dignity, and they are able to reflect and adapt to challenges while being constantly mindful of providing a person-centred, holistic, rights-based service.

Key Learnings

In implementing a cash-first approach, KCC describe a number of key learnings:

- **The exponential rise in food poverty and food insecurity has put increasing pressure on third sector organisations.** Regularly, KCC's Welfare Advice Service is pushed beyond its capacity, and this takes a toll on their staff. This is described as not only due to time limitations, however it also takes a mental and emotional toll, including vicarious trauma. KCC highlight that this stress requires support measures to be put in place and careful management of the Welfare Advice Service.
- **Despite the many successes of the Welfare Advice Service,** KCC feel like there are still limitations to promoting dignity in accessing food support. For example, they provide food bank vouchers, however are limited in terms of what they can do when community members feel they are treated with suspicion or mistrust when accessing other services.
- **KCC's vision of a Proud, Capable, and Confident multi-cultural community is reported** as directly related to people's relationship with food.



Being able to cook and share the food you love is an essential part of how people make connections and express themselves individually and culturally.



Aspirations

Their reported **aspirations** related to cash-first approaches

- **to increase the involvement of people with lived experience** of food insecurity through, for example, Participatory Action Research
- **to be involved** in research, collective action, and influencing policy related to food insecurity
- **to be part of collective action** that promotes dignity and choice for everyone



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a truly cash-first approach would put power and choice directly into the hands of community members.

Thank you to Kingsway Community Connections for their contribution to this 'cash-first in action' series.

You can see more 'cash-first in action' profiles via
Glasgow Community Food Network's website
at <https://glasgowfood.net/>



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