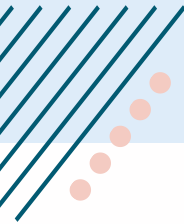


# Cash-first in action: Glasgow South East Foodbank



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Glasgow South East Foodbank (GSE Foodbank) is a small charity that supports people across the **South East of Glasgow** who are experiencing food crisis through the provision of **three days worth of emergency food**.

Whilst GSE Foodbank see people from across the community access their support, the biggest group represented are **single people who live alone**.

The general model of foodbanks is crisis intervention however people often require repeat access to this emergency food.



**“ Our original purpose was crisis intervention, and we try to keep to being a source of emergency provision, but realistically we know that some people come back to us repeatedly. We try to signpost them to other sources of help, while not refusing them the food they need in the meantime. ”**

Founded in 2011 and part of the wider **Trussell Network**, Glasgow South East Foodbank is supported by local churches and faith groups, local community groups and businesses.

The general public also support through permanent collection points in local supermarkets, weekly and ad hoc collections and through financial donations.

With approximately **20 volunteers** and **6 staff**, Glasgow South East Foodbank distributed **8,712 food parcels** in 2024 and numbers remain high.

// Ideally nobody should be in a state where they cannot afford to buy food in the first place.



# Overview of current cash-first approaches

The cash-first approaches currently being offered by GSE Foodbank:

- they work closely with **Citizens Advice** and local **Law Centres** to ensure that they are there whenever the foodbank is open
- work with the **Fuel Bank Foundation** to process fuel vouchers, with the referrals provided by partner agencies
- at key times in the annual calendar, such as Christmas, they are donated **Supermarket vouchers** that can be distributed with food parcels
- they have a **Community Links Worker** who provides connections to a range of support services. They build trust and, along with all other staff and volunteers, offers a dignified and non judgemental approach: this relationship enables increased access to financial and other supports



***“Our ideal is to be rendered redundant by the success of a systemic cash-first approach which gives everybody enough to afford the basics”***

**Figure 1** below shows GSE Foodbank’s cash-first approach in action. GSE Foodbank emphasise that the person accessing the cash-first support does not require another referral to continue accessing this: *“we are the start of the relationship, we build the initial trust”*.

Figure 1: GSE Foodbank Cash-first in Action



# Challenges

Some challenges in actioning a cash-first approach within their Community Food Initiative are:

- **ensuring staff and volunteers are aware of and understand** what agencies and support is available to signpost or refer to
- **supermarket vouchers being available on an occasional basis**, resulting in sometimes having to explain to people that access the foodbank that there are no vouchers, causing disappointment for those seeking these vouchers and a difficult situation for staff. Emergency food is available whenever the foodbank is open.
- **being an agency that administers fuel vouchers** however that does not provide them can cause confusion




# Positives



Implementing this cash-first approach within the foodbank has been found to have positives such as:

- **receiving feedback** that people who have accessed the financial and wider support have **improved mental health** and **improved ability to cope** with ongoing issues
- increased likelihood of people **accessing financial** and **other supports**

***“ Having the support right there, in house, that someone can access straight away, is much better than handing out a phone number ”***





# Key Learnings

In implementing a cash-first approach, GSE Foodbank believe that a successful cash-first approach is **two pronged**:

- 1 one aspect is developing cash- first approaches **organisationally** to move toward their vision of crisis intervention being redundant
- 2 another aspect is their view that there must be a **campaigning side** that advocates for a change in government policy:

***! ! we can't do this in a silo, there must be joined up working and campaigning to ensure that everyone can afford the essentials***

# Aspirations

GSE identified their aspirations in furthering their cash-first approaches. They have long-term aspirations to:

- move toward a model of being a **Community Hub**

*“we’d love to be able to tilt the balance from being a foodbank that also provides advice and support, to being a Community Hub that offers a range of supports including emergency food*

- develop further their **digital inclusion initiatives** so that people have less barriers to accessing their entitlements

# Thank you

## to Glasgow South East Foodbank 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/>

This series was part of a wider Scottish  
Government funded project, delivered by  
Paddy McKenna, commissioned by  
Glasgow Community Food Network.

