



**From mountain to sea**

**Participatory Research with Aberdeenshire Community  
Food Initiatives (CFIs) During Covid 19 in 2021  
Extract from a Collaborative Inquiry**

**Aberdeenshire Community Learning  
and Development (CLD) Service**

1<sup>st</sup> December 2021

*Community Learning and Development  
Changing Lives Strengthening Communities*



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## 1 Acknowledgements

### Collaborative Inquiry Partners and Participants

We are indebted for the time, service, commitment, and enthusiasm from all partners and participants to their communities and for participation in this research project.

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**Luthermuir Larder, Johnshaven Community Larder; The Haven, Stonehaven; Marykirk Community Larder; Mearns Community Larder; Portlethen Larder; Bervie Pantry; Auchenblae Community Larder; Fraserburgh Foodbank; Fraserburgh Resilience Group; Fraserburgh Salvation Army; Daniel's Place, MacDuff, Peterhead Salvation Army; Peterhead Aberdeenshire Foodbank, New Pitsligo Community Hub, Ellon Aberdeenshire Foodbank, Inverurie Food Larder, Grampian Opportunities, Braemar Pantry; Lumphanan Community Council; Mid Deeside Community Trust; Deeside Compassion Social Supermarket and Huntly Aberdeenshire Foodbank**

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## 2 Research Focus

“I was hungry, and they helped me”

**From crisis to response:** A report into the scope of Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) in Aberdeenshire and what we can learn from those who use them and those who run them.

## 3 Background

During the pandemic, a noticeable increase in Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) was observed in response to the emerging national crisis.

This report is the result of a **collaborative inquiry** by the Aberdeenshire Council Community Learning & Development (CLD) Service and Aberdeenshire-wide Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) in response to food insecurity during the Covid 19 pandemic in July 2021.

### Research Participants

A total of **22 Community Food Initiatives (CFIs)** from across Aberdeenshire actively contributed to the research. **17 CFIs** produced **118 survey responses** and **8 interviews** to provide the framework for interpreting the data gathered.

### Research Questions

- Who is using CFIs and why?
- What do these CFIs do and how are they run?
- What is the role of volunteers?
- What are local food and other related needs?



## 4 Community Food Initiative Visitors

- Most **(97%)** Community Food Initiative (CFI) visitors are of **working age**
- **More people out of work** are using food initiatives than people in work **(60%: 40%)**
- **Those furloughed** were not regular visitors of CFIs
- The most common reasons why people use CFIs are a **shortfall in income (34%)** and a **rise in living costs (37%)**
- **Sustainability ambitions** such as reuse, swap and donate, was the third highest reason for need or use. **(20%)**
- **Weekly visits** to CFIs are most common
- Food received is feeding **more adult-only homes** than homes with children **(60%: 40%)**
- **Half** of respondents are **from homes with just one or two people** and the other **half** help to feed **homes with 3-6 people**



## 5 Community Food Initiative Providers

- Individual Community Food Initiatives (CFIs) serve a varied local need reaching between 5-125 households weekly
- CFIs offer a range of bespoke, adaptive services based on community knowledge of need: signposting to other services, emergency food parcels, weekly food bank visits, larder, or pantry models of food provision
- Community Food Initiatives have evolved and added services, as time has gone on, such as:



- a charity shop
- bring and swap
- cooking classes
- community freezer to complement a community larder
- growing projects
- working in partnership with different agencies

## 6 Community Food Initiative Volunteers

- **Meeting community need and a sense of satisfaction is a driving force** for involvement
- **Human rights** are an important consideration for welfare and dignity for CFI visitors linked to [the Good Food Nation Bill](#)
- **Sustainability principles** are critical to CFIs in terms of future planning, funding, and meeting local and national targets
- **How we work with people matters** – Using a rights-based approach which reduces stigma by emphasising dignity and compassion.
- A concern is emerging for the **‘newly-hungry’** with imminent benefit cuts, furlough ending and the full impact of Covid and Brexit
- Community Food Initiative CFI volunteers must be able to engage with the development of **a ‘joined-up’ local food strategy between all stakeholders**



## 7 Imminent Concerns

- **Benefit Cuts** (Uplift ends Sept 21- reducing income by £80 per month)
- **Growth of ‘the newly hungry’**
- **Social and Rural Isolation** (geographically and psychologically)
- **Funding for CFIs**
- **Venues and resources for CFIs**
- **Unreliable access, supply and distribution of food**
- **Sustainability**



## 8 Future Priorities

1. Facilitate a **joined-up collaborative approach** amongst stakeholders to increase shared participation in the following ways –
  - a. **Communication and Information:** To improve shared knowledge of data and services to impact plans, policy & practice
  - b. **Operation:** Reduce lease rates where possible, share resources, have a designated point of contact to coordinate liaison, make funding streams more accessible and adaptive; reduce food waste and improve quality and quantity of food access by designing solutions that consider growing, giving, cooking, consuming, and sharing food, community by community
  - c. **Strategic:** Increase participation requests and service agreements, seek to influence at a local, regional and national level
2. Empower communities **to embrace a human rights approach to food security** - as a wellbeing need, we all have; a resource we can all use and help to provide
3. **Harness activism from giving to growing to sharing.** Plan coordinated community responses
4. Revisit the concept of **community hubs** for wellbeing, resilience, growth and connectedness
5. Build a **Community Food Initiative (CFI) volunteer resource bank** for access to key documents, how-to, project videos etc
6. **Increase knowledge of lived experience of food insecurity** and check for changes over time so communities and stakeholders can respond appropriately
7. **A collaborative, community, asset-based approach is required** to ensure local and national government strategic aims are achieved within a local context.



## 9 CFI volunteers and visitors' comments

**“Covid has ripped a band-aid off a very dirty wound. It has opened people’s eyes to the fact that there’s not much of a gap between employment and poverty.”**

**“Covid has highlighted not just food issues but loneliness and mental health”**

**“I had just moved from down England, I was homeless, and I just came up here. I needed food and the housing put me to the larder. They were great, gave me food and some bits to get me started in my new home”**

**“I hadn’t got any benefits sorted and was homeless previously, so didn’t have any money. I used it because I needed food”**

**“We’ve got to get people to shift their ideas from ‘are you at the bottom of the ladder or at the top?’ to ‘are you needing investment to help you to be more...be more healthy be more confident...?’”**

**“Food is glue”**

**“They don’t judge and they just want to help”**

**“Covid has revealed, there but for the grace of God, go I.”**

**“They helped me when I was stuck”**

**“They were a life saver.”**

**“I don’t think we’re totally reaching the people we need to reach yet...there are going to be people who need to access services who have never asked for help before and those are the ones we have to find a way to reach.”**

**“I don’t use it anymore, but I still volunteer”**

**“Food is a vehicle to the sense of what community is”**



## 10 Useful Links

- <https://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/>
- <https://feedingbritain.org/>
- [Good Food Nation Scotland Bill – Bills \(proposed laws\) – Scottish Parliament | Scottish Parliament Website](#)
- <https://www.cfine.org>
- [Community Food and Health \(Scotland\)](#)

