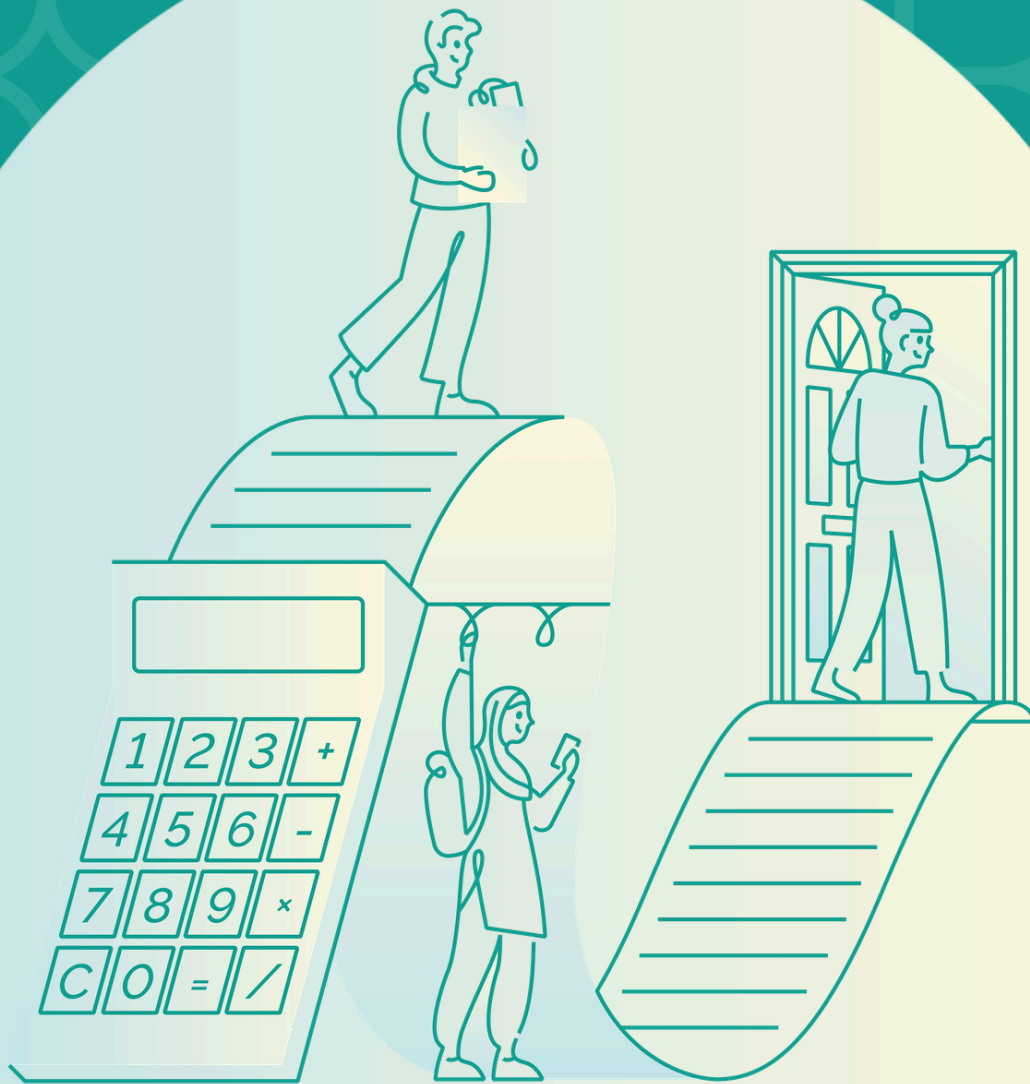


Impact and Insights

Financial Security

2026



The
Robertson
Trust

Change takes trust

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Introduction

We want to see a Scotland where everyone is financially secure and able to live free from poverty and related trauma.

Yet, for many people and families across Scotland, rising costs and deepening hardship continue to make this increasingly difficult.

Over the past year, we have published a series of [Impact and Insights reports](#) relating to our four themes. These reports help us understand the differences that we are contributing to and inform decisions about where we can have the biggest impact on poverty and trauma in Scotland.

This report provides an update to our first [Financial Security report](#), with a focus on food insecurity. It explores the growing challenges of food insecurity in Scotland against a backdrop of deepening poverty and rising food costs. While overall poverty rates have remained relatively stable, increasing numbers of people are experiencing severe financial hardship, with many struggling to afford essential items such as food.

The evidence we are seeing from our grant holders reinforces the importance of approaches that go beyond emergency food provision alone. Cash-first approaches, alongside wrap-around support and co-located services can help tackle the drivers of food insecurity and reduce the risk of future crisis. The report also highlights the wider role that food provision projects play in strengthening communities, reducing isolation and connecting people to additional support.

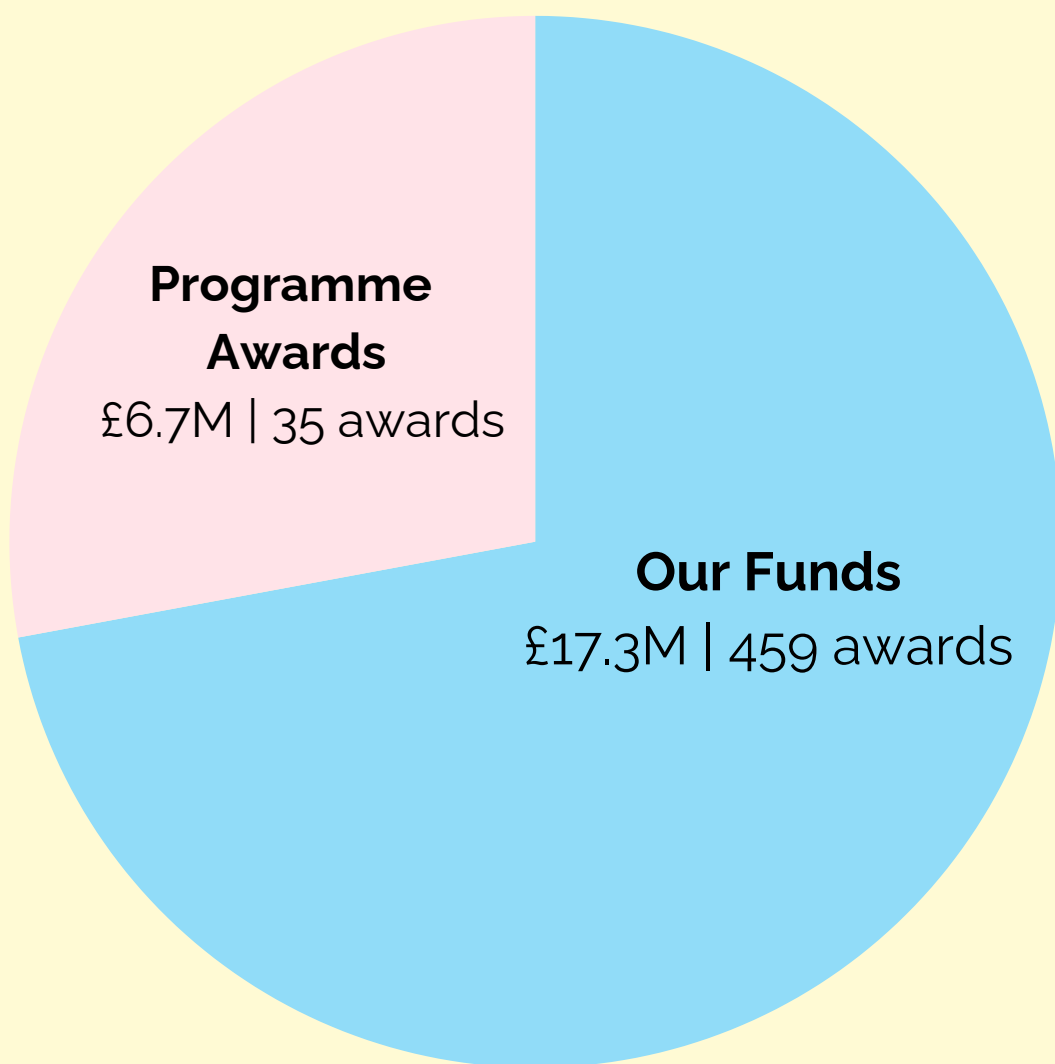
Together, these approaches help meet immediate needs while supporting longer-term, financial security and stronger, connected communities.

We welcome feedback on this report and are always keen to hear from organisations and individuals working in this space. If you have further insights to share, opportunities for collaboration, or examples of effective practice, please do get in touch.

Zoë Ferguson
Head of Impact and Insights

What are we funding?

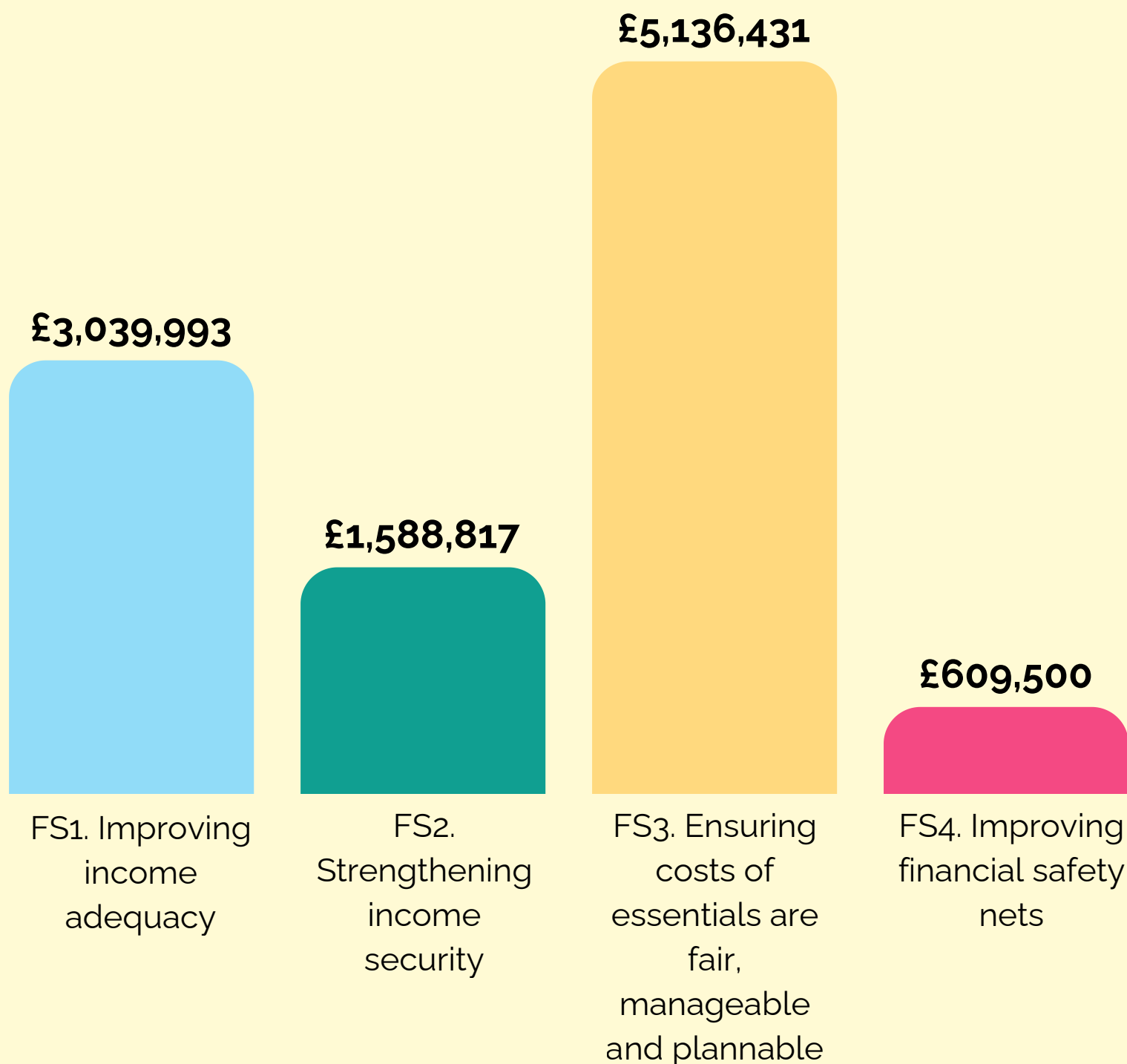
Between 1 April 2022 and 31 January 2026, **494 awards (£24M)** were made through Our Funds* and Programme Awards** with Financial Security as the primary theme:



***Our Funds** is our responsive grant making stream (Wee Grants, Small Grants, Large Grants and Community Spaces)

****Programme Awards** are programmes that supports organisations working in Scotland to deliver long-term, systemic change that prevents and reduces poverty and related trauma. This is now known as our Big Change That Lasts Fund.

From October 2024, we started to allocate Our Funds and Programme Awards to a **primary outcome**. For Financial Security, these are:



A focus on Food Insecurity

For this report, we have focused our impact and insights analysis on grants that are addressing food insecurity, defined as people or households who are 'not able to afford enough food, were at risk of this or could not afford enough nutritious food for a healthy and varied diet. ([JRF, UK Poverty 2026, 2026](#)).

Our analysis is based on:



21 end of year reports for 14 grants



An additional 18 end of year reports for 12 awards to gather quantitative data.



2 Programme Awards linked to food insecurity



Relevant external data (referenced)

External Context

Increase in deep poverty

Recent data from Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) shows that progress on poverty in the UK has flatlined at around 21% and is at a similar level to before the pandemic. In Scotland, poverty rates have fallen slightly from 21% in 2020-2023 to 20% in 2021-2024 ([JRF, Poverty in Scotland 2025](#)).

However, across the UK deepening poverty has increased. In 2023/24, 6.8m people (almost half those in poverty) were in deep poverty which means they have an income that is 2/3rds below the poverty line. This is the highest number since records began in 1994-95 ([JRF, UK Poverty 2026, 2026](#)). 43% of those in poverty in Scotland are in very deep poverty, an increase of 2% since 2024 ([JRF, Poverty in Scotland 2025](#)).

Increasing food insecurity

The increase in deep poverty means that more people are struggling with essential costs and experiencing food insecurity. JRF's Cost-of-Living Tracker for Winter 2025 shows around 700,000 families in Scotland have gone without essentials in the last six months; the most common of which is food ([JRF, Cost-of-Living Tracker, December 2025](#)).

Trussell's most recent data on emergency food parcel distribution reports that provision has doubled in the last decade: increasing from 119,214 parcels distributed in Scotland by Trussell community food banks in 2014/15 to 219,000 in 2025 ([Trussell, Emergency Food Parcel Distribution in Scotland: January 2025 - December 2025, March 2026](#)). However, there has been a decrease from a peak of 276,868 in 2023 ([Trussell, End of Year Food Bank Stats](#)).

‘Food deserts’

We know that the rising cost of food is exacerbated in certain areas where there is a lack of choice and access to food. These are known as ‘food deserts’ and are most likely to be found in rural areas where there is further to travel between shops, and in urban areas where housing developments lack necessary amenities ([Social Market Foundation, Food Deserts in the UK, 2018](#)).

Rising food costs

The Food Foundation has been tracking the cost of a basic basket of food for a man and woman since April 2022. Since then, the woman's food basket has increased in price by 30.6%, now costing £53.51, and the man's basket has increased by 38.4%, now costing £60.24 ([Food Foundation, Food Prices Tracker: May 2026](#)). In February 2026, they reported that inflation for food and non-alcoholic beverages was slightly higher than overall inflation (3.9% compared with 3.2% respectively). Although it is predicted that food inflation will slow over 2026, structural pressures including energy and labour market costs in the supply chain, and climate impacts affecting harvests will mean that prices continue to rise in the shops ([Food Foundation, Food Prices Tracker: February 2026](#)).

Groups disproportionately affected by food insecurity

Groups that are more likely to be affected by food insecurity largely map onto those most at risk of experiencing poverty more generally. E.g. Trussell found that 74% of those referred to a Trussell food bank in 2024 were disabled (for context, 28% of people in the UK are disabled) ([Trussell, Hunger in the UK Wave 2, 2025](#)). Their research also found that in 2024, people from racially minoritised communities were almost twice as likely to experience food insecurity than white people ([Trussell, Hunger in the UK Wave 2, 2025](#)).

What are we learning about impact?

Our funding supports the provision of more than 1m meals and food parcels

Of the 39 end of year reports we reviewed, 29 provided quantitative data demonstrating the reach of funding in terms of food provision. Reports varied but data included:

- **1,158,383 meals provided to people** through nine grants.
- **105,827 food parcels provided** through four grants.
- **53,987 people or households with membership of food pantries supported** through seven of our grants.
- **45,428 people or families supported** through 15 grants

Case Study

Feeding Britain

Large Grant | £105,000 over three years | Glasgow

(approximately 1% of the annual income for the year the award was made)

This grant contributes to the running costs of Threehills Community Supermarket in Glasgow, which is part of Feeding Britain's network providing access to affordable food in a dignified setting for communities across the UK. The Supermarket has around 700 members, who each pay £10-£12 for £20 of food. This equates to estimated savings of up to £280K a year across its 700 members.

The community supermarket has a café that provides culturally sensitive food and is an 'entry point' to accessing wider support delivered through a range of partnerships. Partnerships include the Govan Law Centre and Fuel Bank Foundation, housing associations, and local schools.

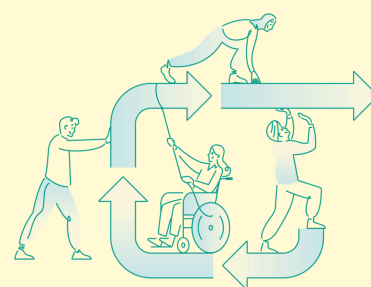


Opportunities for education, training and/ or employment

Some grant holders reported that volunteers had been able to access training and had achieved a range of qualifications (e.g. in food preparation and hygiene). Some had gone on to access other education or employment opportunities, sometimes within the host organisation.

Example

Community food and wellbeing organisations



Through our Small Grants, we have contributed funding to community food and wellbeing organisations. These organisations provide spaces where people can connect, share meals and redistribute surplus food.

We have heard about the important role these spaces can play in creating supportive volunteering networks and helping people move towards education and employment. Volunteers have gained qualifications through their involvement, including hygiene training and SVQ3 qualifications. There are also examples of volunteers going on to secure employment or become trustees within the organisations they supported.

Funding has also supported community food learning projects in local primary schools, giving children opportunities to learn by planting, harvesting, tasting and cooking fresh fruit and vegetables.

Wider outcomes

Grant holders provided evidence of a range of outcomes being achieved.

These included:



Improved financial security. Evidence of this was provided through self-reporting by people accessing support, and by organisations who have calculated the financial gain to people accessing support.



Improved health and wellbeing is linked to having access to nutritious food, and some projects/organisations reference additional support for mental and physical health provided by partners or on-site.



Reduced social isolation, is linked to having opportunities to meet people and make connections.

Case Study

Inverness Foodstuff

Large Grant | £81,000 over three years | Highland

(approximately 14% of the annual income for the year the award was made)

Inverness Foodstuff SCIO is a community centred around providing help, meals, and company for those who face day to day challenges such as homelessness or food insecurity. As well as accessing healthy food, people attending get support from partners including Citizens Advice.

They reported that hosting the local CAB at the same time as the meal provision has led to £42,130.47 in financial gains for people receiving the meals.



Climate Commitment

There is evidence that some of our food insecurity grant holders are considering their work through a lens of sustainability and climate change; more so than we have seen with our other themes.

Reporting on this is often linked to reducing food waste and increasing biodiversity through community gardens.

Case Study

Courtyard Pantry Enterprise

Community Transport | £5,700 for one year | Glasgow



(approximately 2.3% of the annual income for the year the award was made)

Our Community Transport grant helped with the purchase of a four-wheel electric cargo bike to deliver food to and from the pantry hub and to customers in the community.

In seven months from November 2023 to June 2024, the bike travelled almost 600km.

The organisation describes it as a 'game changer' due to the increase in capacity to deliver and pick up food, which has led to an increase in income for the enterprise.

Case Study

Empty Kitchens Full Hearts

Large Grant. £60,000 over three years | Edinburgh

(approximately 4% of the annual income for the year the award was made)



Empty Kitchens Full Hearts provide nutritious meal packs alongside regular wellbeing support to people living in poverty. Meals are cooked from scratch and made entirely from surplus ingredients. Wellbeing support includes phone calls to check in on how people are feeling, and then link people to further support in the community. There is also a weekly community lunch, supporting 50 local people every week to eat well and reduce isolation.

97% of annual survey respondents said that the service had benefited their health and wellbeing, and 65% of the people receiving meals were successfully linked to further support during wellbeing calls.

The organisation reports that healthy food is one of the most urgent needs people have, but that other – often interlinked - issues also need specialist support, e.g. housing, debt, addiction, trauma, and or long-term disability. Addressing the immediate need for food prevents poverty-driven hunger and the trauma it causes; allows for 'space' to focus on other issues; and can prevent re-occurrence (e.g. finding work, a home or building long term solutions). People they support have said that they have had increased capacity to plan ahead.

Patterns in Practice

Through Our Funds, we are supporting different ways of addressing food insecurity. We have categorised activities delivered across a sample of 37 awards as follows:

- **£364K to 7 food pantries, food larders or community supermarkets.** These are sites where food is purchased at a discounted price. They operate as small shops where members pay a weekly or monthly amount and receive food that exceeds that value.
- **£322K to 5 food banks.** This refers to centres where emergency food parcels are distributed. They usually operate on a referral only or voucher-based system. All food banks we support need to offer additional wrap-around support alongside food provision (e.g. money advice services).
- **£145K to 7 organisations providing emergency food parcels.** This refers to pre-made parcels of food that are either collected from a site or delivered to someone's door.
- **£149K to 3 organisations providing food vouchers.** These can be exchanged for essential groceries at food banks or supermarkets.
- **£734K to 15 project or organisations that are providing a combination of the above,** e.g. a food pantry that also provides emergency food parcels. Most of the organisations with a combination of provision also had either a community cafe, where people could buy a heavily discounted lunch or breakfast, or a community meal where the community would come together for a free meal and companionship. Often the community cafes and community meals would use produce from community gardens, or from local businesses.

Cash-first and additional support

Analysis for this report builds on findings from our [2025 Financial Security report](#) with further evidence that wrap-around support (including money advice services, employability, housing and mental health support) alongside emergency food provision and/or cash-first approaches is an essential component for reducing the reoccurrence of food insecurity. It's worth noting that within evaluation reports from both Trussell and the Scottish Government, the term 'cash first' refers to both emergency cash, and effective financial advice and onward referrals.

While impact evidence tends to focus on the longer-term impact of additional support, there is some evidence that cash-first might be more impactful than emergency food provision.

The [Scottish Government's Interim Evaluation](#) of their Cash-First Programme included survey responses showing that people were better able to buy ingredients in bulk and batch cook, buy more fresh produce than is often available in a food bank, and felt that it was a more dignified experience. The [final evaluation](#) echoed this but suggested that sometimes receiving food parcels was more suitable for people who needed food urgently and lived rurally or in an 'food desert'.

The final evaluation also highlighted that cash first programme delivery partners began to learn that 'cash first' addresses more than just food poverty, it dealt with reducing debt, rent arrears, council tax and loans, all of which have an impact on food poverty. It also leads to a more joined up approach to support, through encouraging delivery organisations to work together to form a 'no wrong door' approach to their delivery.

The impact of additional wrap-around support is clearly evidenced, and we understand this to be a key component of support if it is trying to reduce or prevent reoccurrences.

Case Study

Trussell Trust

Programme Award | £230,000 over two years | Scotland-wide



(less than 1% of the annual income in the year the award was made)

The Pathways to Advice and Cash Scotland project (PACS) explored a cash first approach to supporting people experiencing hardship, providing those in financial crisis with direct access to money or vouchers, alongside advice and support to maximise their income. The project aimed to find out what worked and what challenges existed across five pilot sites, and to influence policy and practice by increasing the evidence base to advocate for more effective access to advice services for those in crisis.

Five pilots took place with partners in Orkney, Dundee, Perth & Kinross, North Lanarkshire and Glasgow. A formal evaluation of the project found that people gained financially if they had access to holistic support and advice as well as emergency cash support and that this combined approach lessened the need for using the food bank in the future.

PACS increased the opportunity for joined-up, sustainable crisis support at a local level. During the two-year project, the five pilots supported over 5,000 people, helping them to collectively access over £1 million in financial gains and manage over £800,000 worth of debt. The evaluation revealed that 80% of respondents to a survey reported that they felt supported and 58% said that their mental health had improved after receiving support.

PACS ensured people with lived experience of poverty were involved in developing and refining approaches which was crucial in providing authentic, first-hand insights into the realities, challenges, and needs of people the services aim to support. Together the pilots have increased understanding of how the need for charitable food aid can be prevented in Scotland through community-led models of accessible support.

Co-location of services

In line with evidence above, all of our grants for food provision must provide wrap-around support. Where different services are co-located on the same site, we are seeing evidence of greater impact than referrals or signposting to other services.

Example

Foodbanks

Through our Small Grants, we have supported organisations providing emergency food to people experiencing financial crisis. Most have worked with partner organisations to make advice and support available alongside food distribution.



This has enabled people to speak directly with support workers, receive advice and, where needed, be connected with other services. Organisations have reported that this support has helped people make positive changes to their circumstances. In some cases, the approach has been successful enough for support workers to become a regular presence within community food spaces.

Strengthening community

The reports we reviewed gave a strong indication that food provision projects and organisations provide a focal point for the community within which they operate.

Sharing food often underpins making meaningful connections and many reported reducing isolation and loneliness as part of their work.

Food provision projects and organisations also provide a key point to meet people and address barriers to accessing support often in partnerships with other organisations/institutions such as schools, churches, businesses and third sector organisations.

Case Study

Moray Food Plus

Large Grant | £75,000 over three years | Moray

(approximately 7% of the annual income in the year the award was made)



The mobile pantry service brings food to its 412 members in a large van known as Big Blue. They also offer zero waste cooking workshops for the community using food which would otherwise have gone to waste.

People using the service note that having access to food in a rural area without the need to travel to the nearest town or city is very valuable. There is also a benefit to getting to know people from the local community through attending the pantry.

People visiting the van said: "The bus brings food and friendship", and "Being in a rural area the bus has allowed the ability to meet neighbours previously unknown, friendships formed".

What do you think?

Does this align with the work you are doing or how you are thinking? Have we missed anything? Do you have questions or ideas for us?

If so, please get in touch with us:



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You can also sign up to our [mailing list](#) or follow our social media to keep informed of our Impact and Insights work.

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