

Joint Statement on Food Poverty by the Leaders of Edinburgh and Glasgow City Councils

Glasgow and Edinburgh are committed to eradicating poverty in our cities in all its forms.

Today, most of those living in poverty are in employment, a consequence of reduced wages and a proliferation of exploitative zero hours contracts. Many are unable to find work at all. Changes to the benefit system, including an increased use of sanctions, delays in processing and low benefit levels are fundamental causes of growing poverty.

One consequence of this is food poverty. The combination of low paid or insufficient work, benefit cuts, rising food and fuel costs and the 'Poverty Premium' - which sees the poorest in our communities pay more for everyday necessities such as food, fuel and credit – has rendered tens of thousands unable to eat properly.

The recent report "Food, Fuel and Finance: tackling the poverty premium", made a series of recommendations for action at city, Scottish and UK levels and we endorse its findings. Furthermore, we welcome the work of the Glasgow-based Poverty Leadership Panel and reaffirm our commitment to delivering its objectives.

Many people have given food and time to food banks. This generosity reflects the good will and compassion our cities are famous for. However, food banks are a crisis response to an immediate problem, not a sustainable solution to food poverty. In particular the expansion of the food bank system using 'waste' food from the supermarket system, proposed by a recent All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom, is deeply flawed.

Experience elsewhere has shown that when food banks become too well established they undermine the fundamental rights enshrined in our welfare system. If we become too reliant upon them we risk a return to charity welfare – this must not happen.

Both Glasgow and Edinburgh have thriving community food sectors, including food cooperatives, community shops, healthy eating groups and projects, growing projects and community gardens. Both cities are part of the Sustainable Food Cities network, with Edible Edinburgh and the Glasgow Food Policy Partnership working across sectors in their respective cities. We believe that community food sectors have a role to play in tackling food poverty and making access to nutritious, sustainable food a reality for all.

We pledge to work with all relevant stakeholders – and crucially, this includes those people with first hand experience of poverty - to ensure that all citizens have access to sustainable, nutritious food as a matter of course, not as a result of charity.

We believe:

- Access to food is a basic human right.

- Insufficient food is a symptom of poverty.
- Food banks are a crisis response and will not solve the problem of food poverty.
- Food waste is not an effective or socially just solution to food poverty.

We will:

- Continue to work alongside those with lived experience of poverty to identify solutions.
- Encourage the Scottish and UK governments to work in partnership with local government, communities and the third sector to tackle food poverty and develop a plan to tackle its causes.
- Endorse the recommendations of the Church Action on Poverty report Food, Fuel, Finance and the findings of Glasgow's Poverty Leadership Panel.

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