



All-island Food Poverty Network

## Food Poverty –

Learnings from responses  
to Covid-19



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**Department of Communities' response to food poverty/food insecurity issues in Northern Ireland, including updates on their work with FareShare, the COVID Community Support Fund - Food, and the Social Supermarket programme.**



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**Substantial resources in the initial Emergency Response were provided to help ensure those in need access food. The majority of this help has come from central government (mainly our department - £6.8m DAC Food Boxes, £3.5m Neighbourhood Renewal, a significant proportion of the CSP/COVID contingency fund £1.5m, £400k DE for the EA Eat Well, Live Well support and circa. £1m from independent funders such as CFNI (to which DfC contributed £225k), NCLF and Halifax Foundation.**

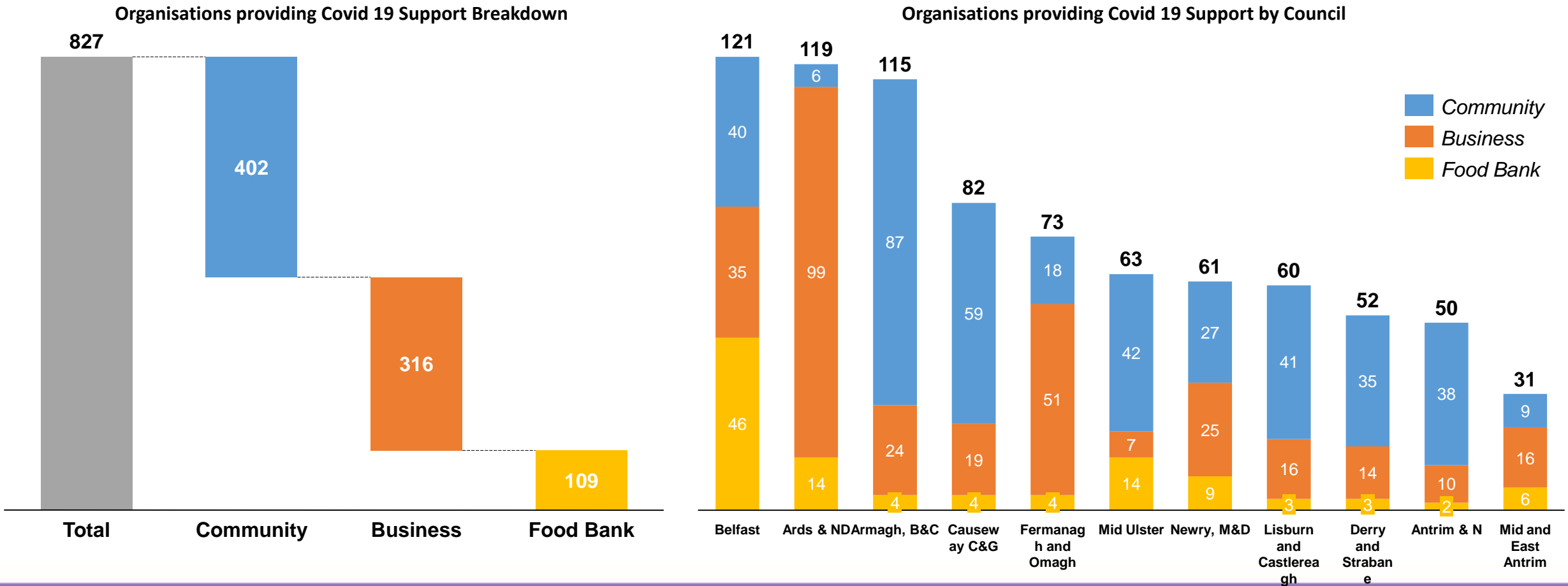
**Over 178,000 boxes delivered in the period to 26<sup>th</sup> June, with a further 25,000 delivered in the five weeks to end July, focussed on the shielding cohort.**

**Alongside the direct support on food, we also have a unique Finance Support Service in Northern Ireland to support people who are in need of short term financial assistance.. This includes a specific living expenses grant, introduced in March 2020, for those directly impacted by Covid-19. A link to the relevant information/advice is included below:**

**<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/extra-financial-support>**

# Support for Vulnerable People Across NI

Based off data provided by Fairshare, Trussell Trust, Belfast Food Network, The Community Foundation, National Lottery & Halifax Foundation, 827 organisations have been identified offering some form of Covid 19 food support. The nature of the support provided varies from shops providing delivery services to charities providing meals.



Note: This analysis represents the data as provided by Key Stakeholders Identified. This data may not be exhaustive and has not been validated.

# Key Observations

A number of key insights and observations have been identified for consideration when reviewing any future interventions to be put in place:



## Partnership

- Collaborative working to ensure a joint approach and avoid duplication of effort across multiple organisations



## Intelligent Funding

- How funding can be best used to support a range of existing and new grantees
- Better communication between funding groups, Councils and DfC to coordinate funding interventions where they are needed



## Support Existing Structures

- Support local food providers to link in with future initiatives and provide food where needed.
- How funding be used to better support existing structures



## Connectivity

- Strong communication among organisations to strengthen and enable informed decision making



## Policy

- Consideration on how future interventions will impact upon current policies and ensure the appropriate governance is put in place



## Evidence based

- Continual collation and review of data to ensure evidence based decisions
- Data sharing between key partners to assist with collaborative approach

# DfC Access to Food Programme: An Interim Review

## Review to take into account...

- Underlying demand factors
- Use of data analytics and feedback from partners and service users
- Other activity within the statutory, voluntary and community and private sectors

## Outcomes include..

- A menu of options to take account of a range of needs and local priorities ;
- A communications plan to allow for consistency of understanding across all partners;
- Agreement on co-ordinating activity to avoid either duplication or gaps in provision; and
- An initial transition plan for those currently in receipt of food support.






# DfC Access to Food Programme: Food Poverty

There is a need to address the level of food poverty/ food insecurity and to understand better the components of this group and to develop a needs based approach which considers the following areas:

- 1 Within the economically vulnerable group, is it a poverty issue or a food poverty issue?
- 2 To what extent did the issues precede the emergency; are due to the emergency; or will emerge due to the overall economic impact of the emergency?
- 3 What are the characteristics of those seeking help with food (those in receipt of benefits, those in work etc.?)
- 4 How do we move from an emergency response towards a longer term food poverty approach?

# Summary of Observations provided by Councils and Health Trusts

Councils and Health Trusts provided an overview of lessons learnt, needs identified and local priorities over the next 9 months some of the observations have been outlined below:

 Lessons Learned 	 What needs have been identified? 	 What are our priorities?
<p>What worked well:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Local Growth P/ships</li><li>• Volunteer Effort</li><li>• Support Food Banks</li><li>• Good Communication</li><li>• Data capture within overall process</li><li>• Local knowledge and infrastructure</li></ul> <p>Challenges:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Lack of data for shielded patients</li><li>• Need for more robust referral criteria system/communication on entitlement</li><li>• Demand outstripped supply</li><li>• Messaging and managing expectations</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Food Poverty</li><li>• Mental Health</li><li>• Domestic Violence</li><li>• Long term funding</li><li>• Support for elderly e.g. access to online facilities</li><li>• Local solutions</li><li>• Continued support to Voluntary and Community Sector</li><li>• Second Wave Planning</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shielded Cohort</li><li>• Resourcing</li><li>• Community Support</li><li>• Recovery Plans</li><li>• Second Wave Planning</li><li>• Social Interactions</li><li>• Vouchers</li><li>• Social Supermarkets</li><li>• Mental Health</li><li>• Domestic Violence</li><li>• Continued support to Voluntary and Community Sector</li><li>• Link to Community Planning</li></ul>



# Future Objectives Identified

During the workshops a number of joint objectives were identified as detailed below:

Future Support	Sustainability	Delivery Models
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Holiday hunger</li><li>• Elderly</li><li>• Holistic Wellbeing Approach</li><li>• Family Support</li><li>• Rural/ Urban Strategies</li><li>• BME Communities</li><li>• Next Wave Planning</li></ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Collaborative decision making</li><li>• Upskilling staff</li><li>• Utilising expertise and resources</li><li>• Embed VCS within local and regional coordination</li></ul>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Criteria</li><li>• IT Support</li><li>• Centralisation</li><li>• Data Sharing</li><li>• Co-design</li><li>• Funding</li></ul>

## **The current actions as a result of the review:**

- 1. An additional investment of almost £800k supporting Fareshare to deliver an increased supply of food to community food providers.**
- 2. Boost to the Food Foundation Survey alongside some additional analysis from Sinead Fury Ulster University.**

**3. Whilst we recognise that food may be at the forefront of need, the transition from an emergency response includes support and advice on wider issues and the strong network of local services will be vitally important. To that end we have made a £750k allocation to Councils a COVID-19 Access to Food Fund. The Access to Food Fund will help to deliver a more strategic response that will shape any future emergency response and for ongoing and future policy development, reflecting how we work in partnership to co-design and co-deliver support. In the context of supporting people experiencing food poverty, the proposed support will:**

- Recognise and maximise the local infrastructure – building capacity, capability and collaboration with stakeholders:**
- Build on partnerships established, including the Voluntary and Community Sector:**
- Broker strategic/programme links within and between actions to deliver improved outcomes for citizens**

**4. Since October 2017 five Social Supermarket pilots have been supported (originally as part of the Welfare Mitigations package). A Social Supermarket offers food provision alongside a wraparound of support to address the underlying causes of food insecurity. Evaluation of these has shown positive outcomes for users and a business case to consider a full roll out is underway. This model has the potential to form a sustainable part of the food response in the medium to long term.**



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**Finally, the department in conjunction with its community partners will continue to signpost people to other ways in which they can access food including:**

- **Priority online shopping deliveries for those shielding with the large supermarkets.**
- **Delivery services from a range of local shops.**
- **Local volunteers to assist with delivering shopping**
- **Local support through voluntary and community sector organisations/food charities.**



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**In going forward DfC committed to delivering long-term sustainable solutions to poverty in all its forms including food poverty. We are very much aware of the increasing need for food across our communities and the likelihood of this continuing as the economic consequences of the pandemic continue. The issue of food insecurity and the associated impacts of Covid-19 cut across all Departments. Tackling this in the longer term must be considered within the broader context of an Anti-Poverty Strategy that is well informed throughout its development with the involvement of our citizens and communities.**

**Following Executive approval Minister announced on 24 September that work is to commence on the development of a suite of Social Inclusion Strategies including an Anti-poverty Strategy. It is anticipated that the Strategy will be published by the end of 2021, subject to Executive agreement.**