

Overview: Food and fuel insecurity

Fairer Renfrewshire Sub-Committee

16th August 2022



Renfrewshire
Council

Overview



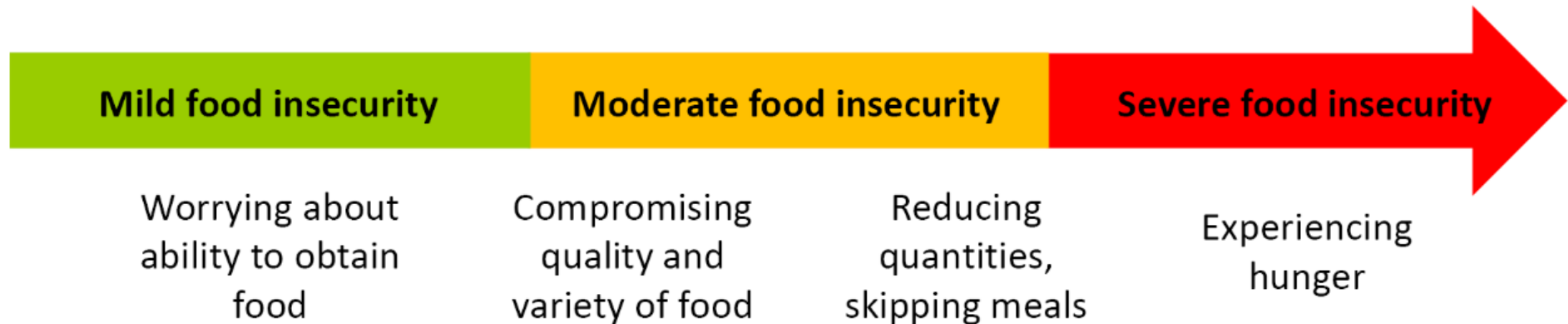
- Today's presentation gives an overview of fuel and food insecurity
- Current local work, challenges and next steps
- These issues need to be considered in the context of poverty and cost of living crisis – these are not distinct issues
- Fundamentally, households need a sufficient income to cover the cost of living a dignified life
- This presentation is focussed on work related specifically to food and fuel, and does not cover full range of work on financial insecurity



Food insecurity

What is food insecurity?

‘the inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so’



Source: Scale from The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations³³

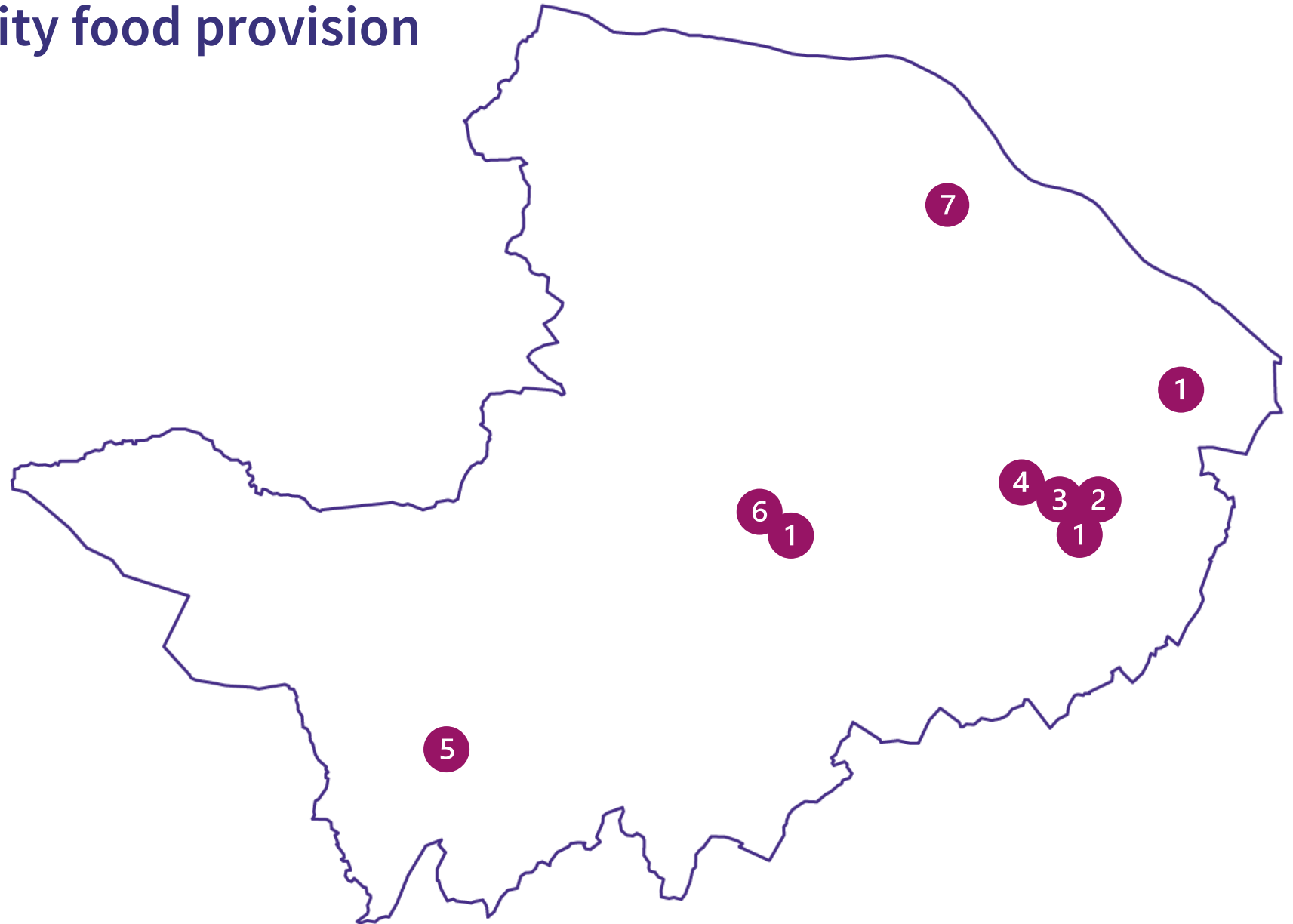
Context

- The biggest problem is not having enough money to feed yourself
- Emergency food aid is not a long-term solution to hunger – ‘cash first’ approaches should be prioritized where this is possible
- There are a range of different models of community food provision across Renfrewshire
- Food aid should be provided in a dignified way
- Good Food Nation Bill passed in June 2022 – we will need to produce a local plan



Map of local community food provision

- 1 Renfrewshire Foodbank
- 2 RAMH Pantry, Paisley
- 3 STAR Pantry Plus
- 4 Ferguslie Community Market
- 5 Lochwinnoch Community Larder
- 6 Active Communities Pantry
- 7 EBI Community Pantry



Current work

LB agrees funding for three pantries

Community Food Fund launched

STAR Pantry Plus re-launched

Active Communities Pantry opens



June 2021

Sept 2021

October 2021

February 2022

June 2022

July 2022

Community Food Fund awards
(Darkwood Crew, KLAS care,
Lochwinnoch Community
Larder)

RAMH Pantry opens

Community Food Fund
relaunched

Other types of food provision

- There are a range of food projects funded from other Council sources and externally funded
- Breakfast clubs, free school meals and free school meal payments
- Street stuff – free food with activities and during school holidays
- Community meals service, Food Train
- Community growing initiatives
- Best Start Foods





Challenges

- Inflation and food prices – inflation risen to 9.4% as of July 2022.
- Food and non-alcoholic beverages have risen by 9.8% in the year up to June 2022, up from 8.7% in May and the highest rate since March 2009.
- Surplus food supply affected by a number of external factors – HGV driver shortage, logistics and supply chain issues, high demand
- Healthy and nutritious food can be less affordable and less accessible

We are fair, We are helpful, We are great collaborators, We value learning



Case Study: Community Food Fund, Lochwinnoch Community Larder

“The Larder is for everyone, regardless of your circumstances. The Larder began delivering food parcels to vulnerable and isolating families during the COVID-19 pandemic and has now evolved into a Community Pantry which redistributed surplus food from supermarkets to anyone who needs it. We changed to a Community Pantry because we wanted to make a greater impact. We knew there were many families who were not stepping forward for help because it felt undignified. We also wanted to create a space where people could meet and socialise without spending money.

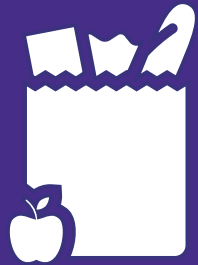
The Larder is now used by nearly 300 households a week, with the total number of people benefiting from it weekly closer to 600.”

“I use the Larder as it helps me with certain foods when I lost my job due to COVID. It has helped me massively and helped relieve stress of being on universal credit during this time.”

“I think this is a fantastic initiative. I hate food waste so I approve thoroughly of this and it is helping so many people.”

“I use the Larder because I am struggling with everything going up in price in the shops.”

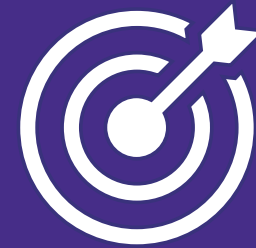
Next steps



Next round of Community Food Fund – applications to be considered at September Leadership Board



Development of Food Partnership



Food Strategy and Action Plan



Fuel insecurity

What is fuel insecurity?

A household is in fuel poverty if the household's fuel costs are more than 10% of the household's disposable income

In Renfrewshire, 31% of households are considered to be in fuel poverty, compared to a Scottish average of 36%. (Feb 2022)

Main causes of fuel poverty

Low income

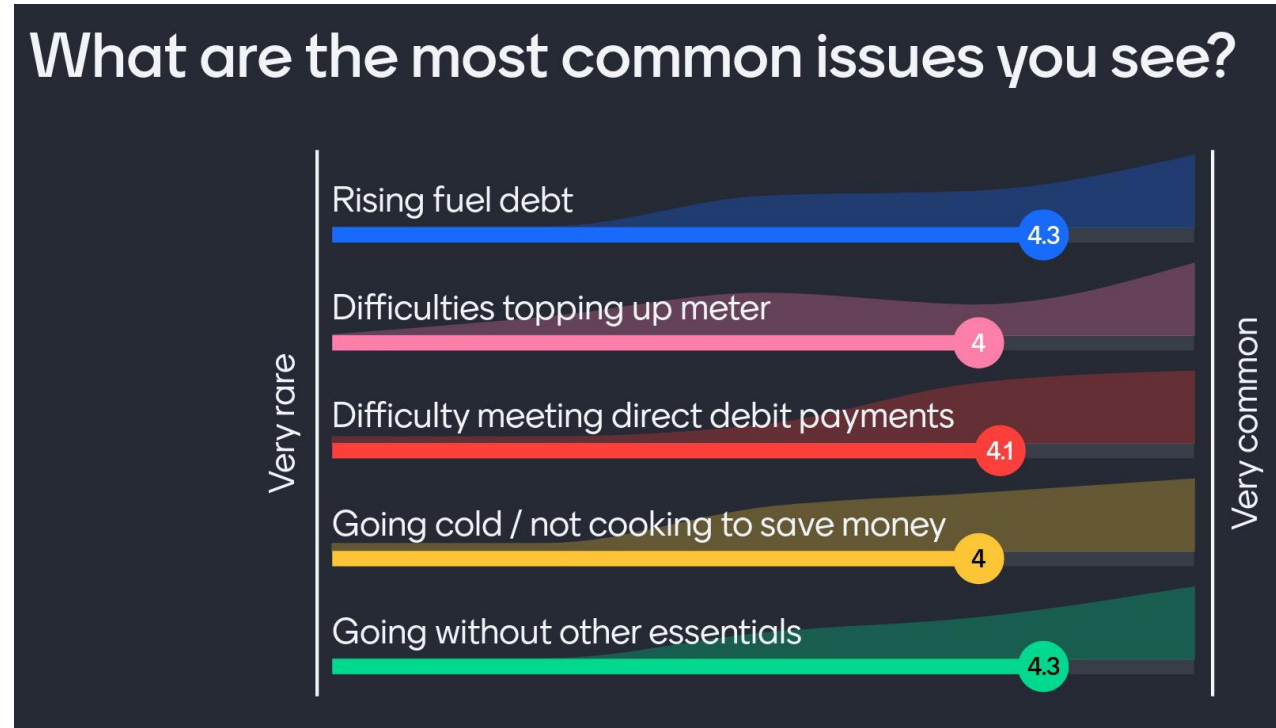
High price of fuel

Poor energy efficiency

How energy is used in the home

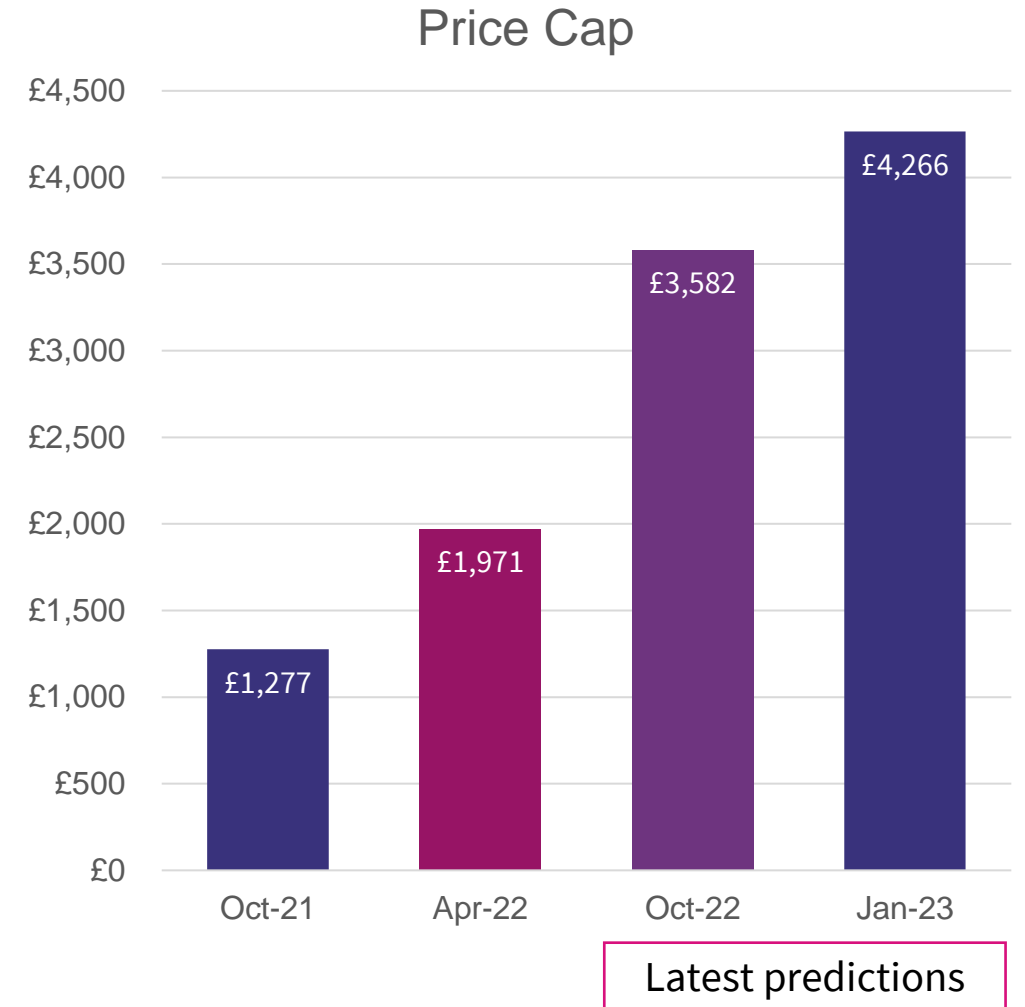
Context

- The biggest current challenge is the rising cost of domestic fuel due to rises in the energy price cap
- Low income households are more likely to have pre-payment meters, which are often more expensive than credit meters (paying by direct debit)
- Local anecdotal evidence indicates the consumer environment is more challenging – vulnerable customers often need additional support and advocacy
- There is national and local support available for households, but this can be complex and some funding sources can be short-term and/or limited



Rising energy costs

- There have been significant increases in gas and electricity prices over the last year
- It is predicted that the energy price cap will be increased by 81% in October, to approximately £3,582
- The cap rose by 54% in April 2022, to £1,971
- This is higher for people on prepayment meters
- ‘Shopping’ for cheaper tariffs is largely no longer possible



Current work

- **Fuel Insecurity Pilot** – working alongside Renfrewshire Foodbank, Linstone Housing Association and Renfrewshire Citizens' Advice Bureau to provide emergency assistance with fuel costs to households alongside energy advice. Available for people on either pre-payment or credit meters.
- **Energy Management Unit** – providing advice and advocacy around fuel and energy issues.
- **Information sessions** for practitioners (Council and partners) as well as RenTalks for Council, HSCP and OneRen staff with either personal or professional interest.



LINSTONE
HOUSING



Case Study: Fuel Insecurity Pilot, Renfrewshire Citizens' Advice Bureau

Client A has an extremely low income and also has addiction issues. Client had amounted a large energy debt due to struggling to manage her limited income, and owed £1,450 to Scottish Power.

Using the specialist CAB/ Adviser Only Teams at Scottish Power (which bypass the usual press 1234 to speak to a customer services agent) the adviser established that the client was liable for the debt. As Scottish Power had not made a mistake in this case they were unwilling to consider reducing the debt or writing the debt off regardless of client A's circumstances.

Client advised an application to a grant/fund providers would be beneficial in this case as an award to clear or partially clear the debt may be made. The grant/fund provider awarded the full amount of debt owed with a further £200 in fuel vouchers to help the client meet their next few energy top-ups.

Adviser also completed a full benefit check for this client to maximise her income.

Financial Insecurity Winter Payment

- Introduced in 2022 using Scottish Government Winter Support Funding, and then topped-up from both Council budget motion and COVID-19 Economic Recovery Fund
- Flat rate grant of £100 per households, paid directly to bank account
- Managed on a referral only basis to ensure fair distribution and targeting of the fund
- Co-ordinated by Advice Works, who also offer money advice to all recipients
- Simple criteria allow for support to be offered to low-income households whether their income is predominantly social security benefits or if they are working on a low-income.



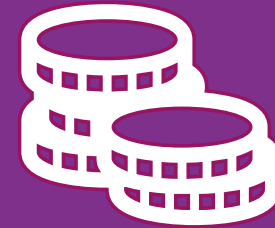
Next steps



Continue working with partners to understand issues



Share information on available support for practitioners and households



Review Financial Insecurity Winter Payment