



Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

West Lothian Civic Centre
Howden South Road
LIVINGSTON
EH54 6FF

24 February 2017

A meeting of the **Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel** of West Lothian Council will be held within **Council Chambers, West Lothian Civic Centre** on **Thursday 2 March 2017 at 8:30 a.m.**

For Chief Executive

BUSINESS

Public Session

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Interest - Members should declare any financial and non-financial interests they have in the items of business for consideration at the meeting, identifying the relevant agenda item and the nature of their interest.
3. Order of Business, including notice of urgent business
4. Confirm Draft Minute of Meeting of the Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel held on Thursday 1 December 2016 (herewith).
5. An Enterprising Third Sector
 - (a) Presentation by Whitburn Community Development Trust
 - (b) Report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
6. Food Poverty/Insecurity in West Lothian - Report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)

DATA LABEL: Public

7. Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian - Report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
8. Health Checks and Quality Improvement - Report by Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration (herewith)
9. Workplan (herewith)

NOTE **For further information please contact Elaine Dow on 01506 281594 or email elaine.dow@westlothian.gov.uk**

MINUTE of MEETING of the VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL of WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL held within COUNCIL CHAMBERS, WEST LoTHIAN CIVIC CENTRE, on 1 DECEMBER 2016.

Present – Councillors Jim Dixon (Chair), Tom Conn, David Dodds, Lawrence Fitzpatrick (substituting for John McGinty), John Muir, David Tait

Apologies – Councillor John McGinty

In attendance

Bridget Meisak, Chief Executive Officer, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian
Ian Buchanan, Senior People's Forum Representative
Fiona Pearson, West Lothian Social Enterprise Network
Mary-Denise McKernan, Chief Executive, Carers West Lothian

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest made.

2. MINUTE

The Panel approved the minute of its meeting held on 22 September 2016 as being a correct record. The Chair then signed the minute.

Matters arising

Page 125 – Matters arising under the previous minute of meeting held on 16 June 2016

The Panel noted the comments from Councillor Conn that he had not yet received an update regarding his concerns raised at the previous meeting regarding the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) releasing full details of their response to the 29 red health scores allocated to them at their previous health check to allow scrutiny to be carried out by the Panel.

The Lead Officer apologised to the Panel as he was under the impression that a meeting had been arranged between Councillor Conn and the Chief Executive's office. He undertook to schedule a meeting with either the Chief Executive or Depute Chief Executive at the earliest opportunity to allow Councillor Conn to discuss his concerns further.

Decision

1. To approve the minute of the meeting held on 22 September 2016; and
2. To note that the Lead Officer undertook to arrange a meeting to allow Councillor Conn to raise his concerns with the Chief Executive's office.

3. AN ENTERPRISING THIRD SECTOR

The Panel welcomed Mary-Denise McKernan, Chief Executive, Carers of West Lothian, to the meeting. Ms McKernan provided details of the information and support available from the service and the work carried out to support carers of all ages.

Details of the key achievements of Carers of West Lothian from 2011 to 2016 were highlighted which included a number of significant developments over the five year period which enabled the service to best meet the needs of carers in West Lothian. A number of key points were summarised which included:

- 2015 - The restructuring of the governance structure of the organisation from having a Management Committee and Board to a Board only structure;
- 2014 – Moved to larger self-contained premises to enable organisational development and growth;
- 2013 - 10th Anniversary of West Lothian Young Carers Project;
- 2013 - Achieved PQASSO Quality Mark at Level 2, which lasted for three years. The service recently took part in another assessment and awaited the outcome.
- Secured BIG Lottery funding to enable support to be provided to individual projects;
- Additional support for young carers;
- Launch of 'Natter with Nancy' and
- New links with Marie Curie and the MacMillan Centre in St John's Hospital.

Ms McKernan advised that work was ongoing to allow the service to continue to develop services offered to carers in West Lothian. Preparation was also taking place for the implementation of the new Carers Act which was due to come into effect in April 2018.

Ms McKernan then responded to questions from Panel members. The Panel then thanked her for attending the meeting and providing an update on the excellent work carried out to support carers in West Lothian.

Following the conclusion of the presentation the Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing details of the activities being undertaken to support the development of more enterprising third sector organisations in West Lothian.

Fiona Pearson, Co-ordinator of West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSEN), then provided an update on the activities undertaken since the

previous meeting, details of which were attached at appendix 1 to the report. Ms Pearson advised Panel members that work was ongoing with partner organisations to secure EU funding, however, as a result of the Brexit Referendum there continued to be delays to the fund administration. It was also noted that the EU funding period was likely to end in March 2019 rather than 2020 as anticipated.

WLSEN continues to explore funding options to reduce reliance on West Lothian Council in the longer term, however, it was likely that further support would be required for financial year 2017/18.

Decision

1. Noted the presentation by Carers of West Lothian;
2. Noted the contents of the report; and
3. Noted the update from West Lothian Social Enterprise Network

4. VOLUNTARY SECTOR GATEWAY WEST LoTHIAN

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration advising Panel members of the activities being undertaken by the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within West Lothian. The update report from the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian was attached as an appendix to the report.

Panel members were advised that this was the second report submitted to the Voluntary Organisations PDSP since the new board of Directors and CEO, Bridget Meisak, took up post. The report provided updates from across the range of activities undertaken by TSI's. Future reports would continue to map the progress of the organisation in seeking to deliver on its work plan agreed between the organisation, Scottish Government and West Lothian Council. The format of the update reports would be continuously reviewed in order to ensure that the PDSP was provided with the most relevant information.

The Chief Executive Officer of VSGWL, Bridget Meisak, provided an update on the progress made relating to the role of the West Lothian Third Sector Interface (TSI), Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian, in relation to representing Third Sector interests to the Community Planning Partnership (CPP). She advised that VSGWL had gone through an internal restructuring exercise to create an organisation 'fit for purpose' to build on the good work of the board to deliver the outcomes agreed in the work plan which linked directly to SOA. New board members have been recruited who would stand for election along with members of the interim Board at the AGM in December 2016. An external recruitment process was now underway.

Refreshed Governance documents including policies and procedures were being rolled out. Work continued in partnership with WLSEN to

deliver Social Enterprise Outcomes and maximise opportunities to engage with partners. A review of how TSI services were developed and monitored was being carried out with a view to implementing a model for scrutiny of the structure.

Finally, it was noted that the role of the TSI was to build capacity in the Third Sector through support for thematic networks, provision of learning events, expert led training and the brokering of peer to peer support.

Decision

1. Noted the contents of the report; and
2. Noted the update from the Chief Executive Officer, VSGWL.

5. VOLUNTARY SECTOR: ALLOCATION OF FUNDS FROM THE PENSIONERS' GROUPS CHRISTMAS FUND 2016

A report had been circulated by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration Services providing details of the allocations made from the Pensioners' Groups Christmas Fund in 2016 to voluntary and community organisations in individual wards, Livingston-wide and West Lothian-wide, details of which were attached as appendices to the report.

The report confirmed that in 2016 the total fund was £29,093. The total number of applications issued to groups in West Lothian in 2016 was 83. Eighty applications were sent to ward-based organisations of which 74 applications were received and supported.

Two applications were sent to West Lothian-wide organisations. Both applications were received and the groups were supported. One application was sent out to a Livingston-wide organisation. The application was received and the group supported.

In conclusion, it was noted that letters were issued to groups in October 2016 advising of the amount of funding they would receive. Payments were made to the groups bank accounts during November via PECOS.

The Panel was asked to note that 77 groups applied to the Pensioners' Christmas Fund and were supported.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

6. HEALTH CHECKS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an update on the joint working with Quality Scotland (QS) in relation to a BIG lottery funded project with Voluntary Action Scotland

(VAS) and Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSG). The tailored quality framework aligned to the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM) supported previous work carried out in supporting third sector organisations to gain a recognised quality accreditation. The project would also deliver a bespoke self-assessment tool that would revise, update and improve the current health check.

The health check process has proved its worth in highlighting the benefits of continuous improvement by all organisations with both Link Officers and Chief Officers/Trustees reporting a better understanding of the process and improvement plans being prepared as appropriate.

The Panel was asked to note that following the changes at both trustee and CEO level in the VSG, formal links to the QS/VAS project have been made and it was anticipated that the programme timetable showing short, medium and long term outcomes would be completed by January 2017 realigning the health check to incorporate quality and links to SQA outcomes within an online self-assessment tool.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

7. WEST LOTHIAN ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY COVENANT

The Panel considered a report (copies of which had been circulated) by the Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration providing an update on the delivery of the West Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant (WLAFFCC) Action Plan and the intention to review and update the plan to cover the period April 2017 to March 2022.

The report advised that the WLAFFCC is a voluntary statement of mutual support between a civilian community and its local armed forces community. The intention was to complement the Armed Forces Covenant which outlines the moral obligations between the nation, the government and the armed forces at a local level. The aim of the Community Covenant was to encourage communities, charities, businesses, local government and health care providers to support all our armed forces across West Lothian.

The report recalled that the WLAFFCC hosted a stakeholders' event on 23 May 2013 to identify barriers to accessing services that could be faced by some members of the armed forces community. A high level action plan to address these was agreed. The action plan was launched on 4th September 2013 and due to conclude on 31 March 2017. The report also outlined the Armed Forces Covenant Concessions available in West Lothian and reported on a briefing organised with housing officers in November 2016 where a comprehensive presentation was provided on the current policies.

The current action plan proved to be a very positive vehicle for raising awareness and co-ordinating support for the veterans community in West

Lothian. However, a number of changes have occurred in relation to both UK and Scottish policies and practices. As the plan was timed to end in March 2017 a review was carried out on what had been achieved and key areas were identified where partners could continue to work together to further raise the profile of the WLAFFCC for the benefit of the Armed Forces Community and specifically to maximise the role of voluntary and community organisations in providing relevant services in order to minimise the potential disadvantage that may be caused by the transient nature of military life. A new action plan was being prepared covering the period April 2017 to March 2022. Further details would be submitted to a future meeting of the Voluntary Organisations PDSP.

The Panel was asked to note the contents of the report, the benefits arising from the recent housing briefing and of the potential for more co-production between council services and voluntary and community organisations in supporting veterans.

Decision

Noted the contents of the report.

8. WORKPLAN

The Panel noted the workplan (copies of which had been circulated).

Councillor Dodds highlighted that item 4 on the workplan, Food Poverty, had not been included for consideration on the agenda.

The Community Regeneration Manager advised that a draft report on Food Poverty was available however this still had to be finalised and approved prior to being submitted to the relevant committees for consideration.

Decision

Noted the workplan and the update in relation to the Food Poverty report.



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

AN ENTERPRISING THIRD SECTOR

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update PDSP members of current activities being undertaken to support the development of more enterprising third sector organisations in West Lothian and to invite staff and trustees from Whitburn Community Development Trust to make a presentation to the PDSP highlighting the current work of the organisation to become more enterprising and their plans to identify and secure additional funding from alternative sources.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the PDSP:

1. Invites the manager and trustees from Whitburn Community Development Trust to make a presentation to the panel highlighting their current work and future plans for the organisation;
2. Notes the current West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSN) membership list. (Appendix 1);
3. Notes the positive outcomes in regard to the work undertaken by West Lothian Social Enterprise Network in supporting enterprising third sector organisations. (Appendix 2); and
4. Notes the details regarding the timetable for the process of developing Strategic Objective 23 in Scotland's EU Structural Fund Programmes for 2014-2020 and the actions taken to ensure applications are submitted by or on behalf of the West Lothian Enterprising Third Sector Organisations. (Appendix 2)

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; Providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources and working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None

IV	Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V	Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, resilient, cohesive and safe communities.
VI	Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII	Consideration at PDSP	Reports on the development of an Enterprising Third Sector were considered by the PSDP on 7 March, 23 May, 26 September and 19 December 2013; 13 March, 05 June and 27 November 2014; 19 March, 11 June, 24 September, 03 December 2015, 03 March, 16 June, 2 September and 01 December 2016 2016.
VIII	Other consultations	Discussion on these proposals was undertaken with the voluntary sector through the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) and West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN).

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Support for Social Enterprise

West Lothian Council is committed to supporting volunteering, voluntary organisations, social enterprises and the development of more enterprising and sustainable third sector organisations that contribute to key Community Planning Partnership outcomes. The PDSP will be aware that 'Innovation, Potential and Fresh Thinking: A Framework to Support and Develop More Enterprising Third Sector Organisations' was approved by Council Executive in December 2014. This report contains the eighth update in relation to the Action Plan for the Framework. Further updates will be made to subsequent meetings of the PDSP.

An update from West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN) on the activities they have undertaken since the previous meeting of the panel is attached to this report as Appendix 2. WLSSEN have also provided their current list of members as Appendix 1.

D2 Scotland's EU Structural Fund Programmes for 2014-2020

Further details relating to strategic objective 23 'Enable disadvantaged communities to develop long-term solutions to increase active inclusion and reduce poverty' have now been published by the Scottish Government. The West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSSEN) update outlines our joint approach and timeline for securing resources from this.

E. CONCLUSION

Progress continues to be made in developing and moving forward the four thematic outcomes identified in developing an enterprising third sector in West Lothian, as follows:

1. Enhancing the Business Capacity of ETS Organisations Support for West Lothian Social Enterprise Network has been provided and regular update

- reports to the PDSP have been provided.
2. Addressing Skills Shortages in Organisations and Trustees/Directors.
 3. Involving West Lothian Social Enterprise Network.
 4. Identifying Areas for Support and Development.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

Social Enterprise Strategy 2016-2026

Guide to Social Enterprise Planning

Appendices/Attachments: Two
Appendix 1 – West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSN)
Membership List
Appendix 2- Update from West Lothian Social Enterprise Network

Ross Paterson, Senior Policy Officer

Tel 01506281096, e-mail ross.paterson@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Date of meeting: 2 March 2017

Appendix 1

List of WLSN Members as at 1.2.17

Acredale House Bathgate	Day Care for Older People	Established	Trading
Almond Enterprises Ltd. Livingston	Cleaning and Environmental Services	Established	Trading
Almond Valley Heritage Centre Livingston Village	Tourist Attraction and Heritage Museum	Established	Trading
Almondvale Stadium Community Enterprise Livingston	Community Sports Club	Fledgling	
Beechbrae Blackridge	Community Woodland	Growing	Started trading
BLES Training Bathgate	Employability and Training for young people	Established	Increasing trading
Blackburn & Seafield Credit Union Blackburn	Credit Union	Established	Trading
Boghall Drop-In Boghall, Bathgate	Community Organisation	Growing	Started trading
Braid House Day Centre Livingston	Day Care for Older People	Established	Trading
Broxburn United Sports Club Broxburn	Sports Club	Established	Trading
Bridge Community Project Livingston	Counselling Services	Growing	Trading
Cairns Moir Connections Livingston	Resources for those living or working with children who have experienced trauma	Growing	Trading
Capital Credit Union West Lothian	Credit Union	Established	Trading
Carers of West Lothian	Carer support services	Fledgling	
Community Moorings Linlithgow	Canal Moorings lease and management	Fledgling	Trading
Community Enterprise Ltd.	Development Consultancy and Support	Established	Trading
Craigshill Good Neighbour Network Livingston	Fabric and Textile Re-Use	Fledgling	
Daisy Drop-In Livingston	Children and Parent Services	Established	Trading
Dream Coach HR Bathgate	Health and Wellbeing Coaching	New idea	
Elizabeth Clow Livingston	Building Services	New idea	
Fauldhouse CDT	Office Rental and Community Sports Facility	Established/Growing	Trading
First Steps Linlithgow	Café and Bike Recycling Project	New	
Home Aid West Lothian Bathgate	Furniture Provision and Recycling	Established	Trading

Horizon Housing Assoc Livingston	Housing and Care & Repair services	Established	Trading
Kick Start Livingston	Quad Bike project	New idea	
Kidzeco Bathgate/Livingston	Pre-loved children's goods and services	Established	Trading
Kirknewton CDT Kirknewton	Community Development Housing Project	Established New	
The Larder Livingston	Cook School, training and cafe	Established	Trading
Linlithgow CDT Linlithgow	Community Development Enterprise Hub	New	
Loganlea & Addiewell Pitstop	Café, Soft Play and Social Club	Established	Trading
Lothian Community Transport Edinburgh (deliver services W. Lothian)	Community Transport	Established	Trading
MH Scot Edinburgh (deliver services W. Lothian)	Mental Health Training	Established Edinburgh Growing in WL	Trading
Mood Project Whitburn	Support for people with mental health issues	Growing	Trading
New Directions Livingston Village	Day care for people with learning difficulties	Established	Trading
Regal Community Theatre Bathgate	Theatre, community facilities, Theatre Academy, Radiion Station	Growing	Trading
Scottish Community Film Unit Linlithgow	Film Production	Established	Trading
Simply Play Broxburn	After School Care throughout West Lothian	Established	Trading
Sports Pathway Coaching Livingston	Sports Coaching	New	
Station Wagon Kirknewton	Coffee station	New idea	
Stoneyburn & Bents Future Vision Group Stponeyburn	Community Development Exploring social enterprise	New	
The Tree Club Bathgate	Children's Services	Established	Trading
The Vennie Livingston	Youth Services Bike hire project	Established New	
West Calder & Harburn CDT West Calder	Community Development Exploring social enterprise	New	
West Lothian Credit Union Livingston	Credit Union	Established	Trading
West Lothian Drug and Alcohol Services Livingston	Drug and Alcohol Services Training Counselling	Established	Trading
West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network Whitburn	Financial Advice and Training Exploring social enterprise	New	

West Lothian Youth Action Project Livingston	Tooled UP Gardening, handyman and garden furniture	Growing	Trading
Whitburn Academy Enterprises Whitburn	School Enterprise Ongoing short projects	Established	Trading (low level)
Whitburn & District CDT Whitburn	Community Development Exploring social enterprise	New	
West Lothian Women's Aid Livingston	Domestic Abuse Training	New	
YWCA Scotland Young Women's Movement	Confidence Building Workshops	New	



Appendix 2

Report to Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel

2nd March 2017 Meeting

West Lothian Social Enterprise Network/Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

The first three quarters of the contract between West Lothian Social Enterprise Network (WLSen) and West Lothian's TSI, Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) have been completed with outcomes on target.

WLSen continues to participate in the Third Sector Strategy Group as the social enterprise representative and will be highlighting recent developments in social enterprise to the wider sector at the next Voluntary Sector Forum.

Leadership Capacity Building

14 participants are undertaking courses for Aspiring Leaders, Senior Leaders and Developing Entrepreneurs at present. Further reports on outcomes will be provided at the end of the courses.

Employability Opportunities for Social Enterprises

The potential for a West Lothian Employability Consortium continue with discussions planned with relevant WLC officers to explore opportunities both locally and nationally. Further updates will be provided as things progress. Support is being provided by WLSen, Senscot and Business Gateway.

EU Funding

The Social Economy Growth Fund and Social Innovation Fund were launched on 10th January 2017 with a deadline of 17th February 2017. The Aspiring Communities Fund was launched 10th February with a deadline of 7th April, 2017.

WLSen has been working with partner organisations on a draft bid for several months, and have several concerns about the Funds:

- The criteria for both, the Social Economy Growth Fund and the Social Innovation Fund is much more restrictive than anticipated. (Organisations need to be directly working with priority groups)
- There is no mechanism for a bid by multiple partners and we are awaiting clarification from the Scottish Government on this issue. This is contrary to indications at stakeholder meetings over the last year that partnership bids would be welcome

- There have been several concerns raised by Third Sector intermediaries in respect of the tight deadline, restrictive criteria and 100% staff costs rule, which is prohibitive for most Third Sector organisations. No response to these concerns has been provided at the time of writing this report.
- As grant money is paid in arrears, many Third Sector organisations will have difficulty 'bank-rolling' projects.
- The length of projects has been significantly reduced to 18 months.

In respect of the draft bid that WLSen and partner organisations have been developing, we have agreed :

- That the Key Community Organisation element of our draft bid should be taken forward by one of the KCO's in a separate bid (either Social Economy Growth Fund or Aspiring Communities Fund). WLSen will offer support as required.
- That WLSen and partners will re-evaluate our draft bid and consider making application in the second round if this can be done without losing the ethos and aims of the project.
- That we explore alternative funding for our draft project.

WLSen has promoted the European Funds to its members directly and to the Third Sector as a whole with the VSGWL and will provide support to members submitting applications.

Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal

WLSen continues to participate in discussions and is happy to note that social enterprise development is embedded in both the Skills and Innovation strands of the proposed Edinburgh and South East City Region Deal .

It is hoped that approval of the outline bid by Scottish and UK Governments will be around mid-March, with an announcement from the Chancellor in the Spring Statement.

Membership

WLSen membership has now grown to 51 members. We are delighted to welcome a number of new enterprises and an increasing number of traditional voluntary sector organisations who are working towards becoming more enterprising. The range of services and stage of development is wide and demand for support is growing. It is particularly pleasing to see an increasing number of grass-roots organisations developing enterprise ideas to address local issues.

A breakdown of members list is attached (Appendix I)

DATA LABEL: PUBLIC



West Lothian
Council

VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS PDSP

FOOD POVERTY / INSECURITY IN WEST LoTHIAN

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report provides an update to the Voluntary Organisations PDSP on the findings of a report on food poverty / insecurity in West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the PDSP:-

1. Note the content and findings in the report;
2. Note the recommendations in the report;
3. Note that the Food Poverty Working Group is tasked with taking forward the recommendations made in the report.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I. Council Values	Working in partnership Focusing on customers' needs Being honest, open and accountable
II. Policy and Legal	None
III. Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV. Impact on performance and performance indicators	Supports the possible development and delivery of activities which could support those experiencing food poverty / insecurity.
V. Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	Supporting the delivery of outcomes at a local and council wide level.
VI. Resources (Financial, Staffing and Property)	From existing budget.

- VII. Consideration at Food Poverty / Insecurity has been discussed several PDSP/Executive Committee times at the Voluntary Organisations PDSP. required**
- VIII. Details of consultations** Consultation with relevant officers within council services and partner organisations.

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D.1 Introduction

Household food poverty / insecurity (HFI) has become a subject of policy concern in Scotland and the UK in recent years with research evidence indicating that there are an increasing number of households which are unable to sustain normal patterns of food shopping and eating, and are seeking charitable food aid (or other support) to help them do so.

The Anti-Poverty Strategy Group allocated funding of up to £10,000 to be used to map out food poverty within West Lothian and to look at food insecurity and consider responses which could be developed to address that.

West Lothian Council (WLC) commissioned a specific piece of work to identify the extent of HFI in West Lothian. This was not about the provision of emergency food aid, but assessing the number of individuals, families and households who are experiencing ongoing food shortages.

The consultants selected to undertake the contract, Insight Collective, were required to:-

- Establish a robust estimate of how many people in West Lothian are currently experiencing HFI.
- Interview a number of staff from organisations who assist those currently experiencing HFI to identify why.
- Interview a number of people currently experiencing HFI to identify why they are experiencing HFI and what additional support they need.
- Assess whether there are people currently experiencing HFI but who are not accessing any specific support for this.
- Assess whether people experiencing HFI have less healthy diets due to limited budgets.
- Map existing forms of support, evidence good practice within the local authority and elsewhere.
- Identify gaps in provision and possible ways to address these.
- Prepare a final report of findings and present these to a "close of project" seminar / workshop to be held in West Lothian.

The proposed outcome of the consultancy report was to be a more robust assessment of the number of people currently experiencing household food poverty/insecurity in West Lothian; the causes of this and the characteristics of the households concerned; and any measures which would reduce this.

D.2.1 The scale of Food Poverty in West Lothian

Foodbanks are the most visible indicator of HFI but are not necessarily the best

measure of HFI as they specifically limit support to food packages for three days on a maximum of three occasions.

The Trussell Trust runs a network of over 400 foodbanks, giving emergency food and support to people in crisis across the UK, where thirteen million people live below the poverty line. In 2015-16 they gave out 1,109,309 three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis, which was 2% increase in foodbank use on the previous year. In the first half of 2016-17 more than 500,000 three day emergency food parcels were distributed – over 188,500 to children.

It has nine outlets in West Lothian; Bathgate, Boghall, Blackburn and Seafield, Broxburn, Deans, Dedridge, Knightsridge, Linlithgow and Whitburn. These are largely staffed by volunteers and have different days and hours of opening, ranging from two to three hours per day and one to three days per week. None are open at the weekend.

The number of people who might currently be experiencing food poverty or food insecurity in West Lothian depend on the definitions of food poverty and food insecurity employed. Estimates vary and range from:

- the **2,011 adults and 2,534** children benefitting from Trussell Trust food bank support in the 12 months to September 2016.

Another way to estimate need is to use the results of the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) research project and apply these to West Lothian so that;

- the PSE reports that around 1 in 20 people are unable to afford an adequate diet which, applied to the West Lothian population of 178,550 would amount to **10,713 people**.
- the PSE report that 7% of adults in Scotland lack adequate key food items (two meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables daily; and meat/fish or vegetarian alternative equivalent every other day) – which applied to the West Lothian adult population of 143,448 is **10,041 adults**.
- the PSE report that 3% of households in Scotland with children lack key food items (three meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables every day; and meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent at least once a day) which for the 22,806 West Lothian families with children amounts to **684 households with children** (all of whom will have adults skipping meals to enable children to eat better).

Food poverty and food insecurity in West Lothian is likely to amount to **between 3,300** based on the food bank statistics **up to over 10,000 people** based on national research. The latter figure is probably closer to an accurate assessment.

D.2.2 The decline in foodbank useage in West Lothian

There is a strong, probably causal, link between foodbank usage and benefit sanctions both of which grew significantly during the period of the Coalition Government from 2010. The highest year for sanctions was 2013 (average 75,000 per month) followed by 2012 (average 67,500 per month). The dramatic increase in benefit sanctions (and other benefit measures that reduced or restricted income for lowest income quintile households) was followed by an increase in foodbank usage.

In 2015 the average for sanctions had fallen to 23,000 per month. The reduction in

sanctions to levels last seen in the year 2000 is mirrored across West Lothian over recent years with sanction levels falling from an average of around 340 in 2013 to around a 100 by the end of 2015.

The reduction in sanctions in the past two years has **not** resulted in declining use of foodbanks across the UK. However, there has been a major slowdown in their rate of increase which may suggest that a plateau has been reached. A total of 1,109,309 three-day emergency food supplies were provided to people in crisis by the Trussell Trust in 2015-16, compared to 1,084,604 in 2014/15.

In West Lothian the number of food bank vouchers issued in the year to September 2016 showed a total of 1,170 vouchers being issued to households consisting of 2,011 adults and 2,534 children. There has been a 13% decrease in vouchers issued since October 2013.

The West Lothian foodbank statistics over the period December 2012 to October 2016 showed that majority of clients are single people (59%) or single parents (17%). Families account for 12%, Couples for 10% and others 2%.

The reasons for this could include:

- Improved partnership working which is better at identifying those experiencing food poverty and related issues and signposting them to appropriate support.
- Providing good advice earlier, linked to above.
- Use of crisis grants for food and fuel payments as a first response for those requiring support.
- Better targeting of those in need (not necessarily in relation to food poverty).
- Specific initiatives such as “three or more” which provides a caseworker to support people who access to the foodbanks more than three times.

Examples of broader partnership working are:-

New Build Council Housing

The new build project is a partnership between Advice Shop and Housing to engage with customers who have been offered a new build tenancy. The new build provision offers people the opportunity of an improved and potentially more settled way of living by providing quality accommodation in new developments. The project supports tenants to make informed choices around affordability of the new tenancy, carrying out income maximisation, providing assistance with any existing debts and providing a basic budgeting pack. The project also engages with and makes referral to other services where required eg money advice, tenancy support, social work, occupational therapy. 42 tenants engaged with £28,441.92 income maximised.

Young Peoples Project

To connect low income families to appropriate help, resulting in a resolution of debt problems, whilst enabling the families themselves to better avoid debt problems recurring, knowing what to do if they do recur and become more financially resilient. By doing this parents will have been able to build lasting and effective connections between quality advice providers and trusted sources of support. 72 families engaged with £93,010 income maximised.

Dementia Project

Our focus is to ensure that people living with dementia in West Lothian are aware of the financial support available through the benefits system and are signposted early on to our service.

Working alongside NHS Lothian and Alzheimers West Lothian, people living with dementia will be helped to maximise their income through intervention and support from West Lothian Council Advice Shop. Information provided will enable carers and families to make informed choices. Carers and families will be supported through the welfare benefits claim process and signposted to other agencies where needs are identified. 53 households engaged with £108,644.40 income maximised.

Energy Advice

Working with Home Energy Scotland, West Lothian Housing and other partners 452 households have been supported to change suppliers, arrange payments on fuel debt and compare prices through energy advice generating £178,833 of income from a combination of lower bills, warm home discounts, changing suppliers.

D.2.3 Information on disposable income to analyse the relativity of what is spent on food.

The consultants had structured interviews with 44 participants who were 'recruited' by partner agencies. A total of 44 interviews were carried out, assisted by West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau, WESLO, Family and Community Development, The Dale Hub and WLC Youth Services (More chances, More choices).

The questionnaire covered a range of issues including:

- Planning and food shopping patterns.
- Worries over food and the impact on mental health.
- Experiences of food insecurity and food poverty and the impacts of this.
- The role of services.

Issues identified in the interviews included:

- 19 participants never made a shopping list although they understood the benefit of doing so.
- Participants who had received budgeting advice valued it highly.
- Superstores are the main shopping location with 23 participants shopping regularly at them but frozen food outlets (16) and budget supermarkets (14) are also frequently used.
- The majority of participants, 29, did their main shopping on a weekly or fortnightly basis – the numbers being almost evenly split between the two. Four participants, with large freezers, did a monthly shop.
- Participants generally know where the cheapest food is and where the healthier options are; superstores are the main shopping outlet for most people (23) although frozen food outlets (16) and budget supermarkets (14) are also frequently used.
- Shopping habits and choices are often dictated by circumstances as well as income eg access to transport.

Over two-thirds of the participants have cause to worry about not having enough food (70%) or the quality of food (61%) they consume. Although a slightly lower

proportion worry about the quality of food they consume the proportion remains high. This would suggest that many clients are aware that their food choices are not as healthy and nutritious as they would like them to be but make sacrifices in order to manage on tight budgets.

Participants were aware of the need to make benefits or wages last until the next payment day but that was often difficult due to receiving a lower income than expected eg delay in benefit payments, lower wages and unanticipated expenses. The rise of zero hours contracts for people in low paid and insecure employment makes budgeting very difficult as there is no regular income.

People have choices when faced with financial hardship. Participants were asked whether those experiencing food poverty or food insecurity had resulted in them ever giving up other essential items in order to allow them to eat. In fact 27 of the 28 people who had experienced food poverty or food insecurity had given up other things to pay for food. Some examples included:

- Going without food so others in the household can eat well was a frequently identified experience.
- Delaying TV or mobile phone payments.
- Cutting back on days out (one young participant no longer being able to attend cultural activities with his mum).
- Cutting back on clothing – another young participant had needed to buy new shoes for £20 but had given them up to pay for food.

Participants were also asked about the impacts on their mental and physical health arising out of their experiences of food poverty and food insecurity. The most commonly identified impacts included:

- Six people had experience of skipping meals.
- Five people had on occasions not had enough food in their home to eat.
- Five people had gone a whole day without food.
- Five people had suffered poor health affected by lack of food.
- Three people reported having lost weight.

Client quotes are given in Appendix B to the report.

D2.6 Performance data on anti-poverty which is monitored and reported.

The West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy and Action Plan was launched in 2012 and a Poverty Profile of West Lothian reviewing the changes in the key indicators that help to map the nature and scale of poverty in West Lothian was discussed at the Anti-Poverty Board Meeting on 2 November 2016.

The latest available figures (February 2016 – DWP) show that there are 15,820 benefit claimants of working age (16-64) in West Lothian, of whom 12,500 are in receipt of key out of work benefits. This means that 13.7% of West Lothian residents are on some form of out-of-work benefits compared with 14.3% for Scotland. Both these area rates have fallen since February 2011.

This reduction in Key out of work benefit claimants has mainly been as a result of a fall in the number of JSA claimants and this trend has accelerated since 2013. The picture is mixed for other benefit data. The number of lone parents on Income Support has fallen by almost 400. However, the number of ESA and Incapacity

claimant as remained static at 9,030.

There is clear evidence of in-work poverty shown by both the increase in working tax credit claimants and the estimated rate and number of residents earning below the living wage level. The latest figures for wage levels are for the period up to 6 April 2016, and predate the introduction of the National Living Wage.

There are still underlying issues of poverty and deprivation – with a core of individuals and households experiencing extreme hardship and wider groups experiencing financial difficulties and challenges. Low pay as well as unemployment is a key factor.

Gross wage levels for West Lothian (both residence and workplace) are below the Scottish and GB levels:-

- An estimated 18% of West Lothian working residents earn below the living wage level of £8.25 per hour compared to 19% for Scotland as a whole (data based on 2015-16 living wage and 2016 ASHE data).
- Similarly, approximately 18% of jobs located within West Lothian pay hourly rates below the living wage level compared to 19% for Scotland.
- Approximately 9,400 West Lothian working households receive Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit. This represents 19% of all working households (slightly higher than the Scottish level of 18%)
- The latest available figures show that 24% of children in West Lothian live in low income working households, compared to 25% for Scotland and GB.
- Part time jobs in West Lothian (based on 2014 data) represent 27.4% of total jobs (compared with 26% in 1998 and 27% in 2008). The West Lothian level of part time jobs is also significantly lower than the 32.5% recorded for Scotland and 31.7% for GB.

Latest estimates for average gross disposable household income (after housing costs) suggests that disposable income per head in West Lothian in 2013 was approximately £15,100 per person and £36,000 per household. These figures are below the Scottish levels of £17,300 per person and £38,300 per household. These averages will obviously mask considerable variations between households and individuals.

In 2013/14, an estimated 21,000 children in West Lothian were living in low income households compared with 19,000 three years ago (Source: GRO).

- The headline Claimant Count based unemployment is currently 2,235 or 1.9% (September 2016).
- The International Labour Organisation based unemployment estimate is 4,700 (5.2%) (average for the year April 2015-Mar 2016).
- The number of working age residents claiming Key Out of Work benefits is 12,400 (10.8%) (February 2016).
- The Youth unemployment level based on 18 to 24 year-olds claiming JSA and Universal Credit is 600(4.1%) (September 2016). However, the JSA based measure does not provide a comprehensive picture – it excludes 16-17 year olds and individuals claiming other out-of-work benefits or no benefits at all.

Throughout the UK, nearly one in six (15.9%) children are classified as below the poverty line before housing costs, while one in four (25.1%) are in poverty once housing costs have been deducted from their income. The report does not include a specific estimate for Scotland. However based on aggregating the Scottish Local

Authority data in the report, the Scottish rate once housing costs are deducted is approximately 22%.

West Lothian's level is 13.3% before and 21.2% after housing costs – i.e. just below the Scottish level. Our ranking in Scotland puts us mid table alongside Edinburgh, Midlothian and Falkirk. Glasgow (33% after housing costs) has the highest level of child poverty. Most of the council areas with higher levels of child poverty can be found in the west of Scotland

There are 29,000 people in West Lothian receiving the state pension. Of these, 7,380 (25%) receive Pension Credits. with 18% receiving Pension Credit to ensure a minimum income. These rates are close to the Scottish levels.

D.3 Self-assessed pilot

In addition to the interviews two organisations – the Dale Hub in Armadale and West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau – agreed to trial a shortened, self-assessment questionnaire for their clients. The intention was to determine whether there is a value in a tool which can be shared by West Lothian organisations to assess levels of food insecurity (rather than food poverty) which might exist amongst clients.

A total of 23 questionnaires were completed. The questions were designed to be simple and easy to respond to. They provide an indication of potential need which might go unnoticed depending on the nature of the service in question. Some of the findings are:

- Seven of the 23 people completing the self-assessment tool had occasionally or frequently been anxious about having enough food in the last 12 months
- Nine of the 23 had reason to be occasionally or frequently concerned about the nutritional value of their food in the last 12 months
- Five had experience of not having had enough food in the house in the last 12 months
- Ten had reduced the quality and nutritional value of their food by some degree in the last year
- Five had taken difficult decisions in the last 12 months to enable them to feed their household.

The self-assessment questionnaires are quick and easy for clients to complete. The questions, with hindsight, are perhaps repetitive and should be adapted to provide a richer picture, including other aspects of food poverty and insecurity e.g. cooking skills. The responses probably under-represent people's experiences of hardship to a degree. If adapted and applied in a more targeted fashion, however, the results would help some organisations identify the scale of the challenges facing clients.

D.4 Learning from Local services

The report identified a range of learning points which are worth considering further if agencies are to address some of the issues raised in the report.

- People in more remote communities can find it difficult to access advice locally.
- Healthy Start vouchers were highly valued by mothers who are pregnant or who have children under the age of four. However some interviewees indicated that some retailers were abusing the service, including not providing the full value of the voucher.

- Agencies did not all know if their clients could access food banks and what the eligibility was. Access could be improved for some organisations if there were stronger local information networks.
- Some interviewees identified the value of activity in community settings, although provision can be sporadic and limited.
- Some services know their clients well and have a good understanding of their need. 'Key workers' were valued.
- Awareness of food poverty, food insecurity and client capacity for cooking can often be missing and needs go unidentified.
- There may be additional partnership working which could be developed with distributors, retailers and independent businesses.

D.5 Report recommendations

The consultants' report has identified a number of issues which West Lothian Council and its partners may want to consider in order to improve circumstances for the communities they serve. These include:

- Consideration of the reasons behind the lower than average award rate for the Scottish Welfare Fund in West Lothian.
- The value placed upon budgeting and cooking skills when delivered at the right time the Food Poverty Group may want to map provision and assess the potential to target delivery.
- The interviews identified the main contributory factors behind food poverty and insecurity including various life transitions (e.g. relationship breakdown, illness etc) and West Lothian Council and the Food Poverty Group may want to map the agencies involved in these processes and whether information could be targeted to them.
- There are many good organisations in working with vulnerable clients but awareness of what other organisations do and how they might work together are sometimes lacking – the Food Poverty Group should consider how to increase networking around food poverty, cooking and food production.
- Inter-agency training for staff and volunteers to spot people experiencing food poverty / insecurity and support or refer effectively.
- The potential abuse of Healthy Start Vouchers should be raised with partner agencies.
- The Food Poverty Group should explore the community food hub concept and assess the potential of a network of community food hubs with links to other networks eg growers, community cafes, etc
- To include a focus on food poverty and food insecurity within the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy to raise the profile of the issue and the need for action around it.

E. CONCLUSION

The report provides a wealth of information and analysis on food poverty / insecurity in West Lothian. It identifies a number of key findings and recommendations and it is proposed that the Food Poverty Working Group focusses on this, reporting to the Anti-Poverty Strategy Board.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None.

Appendices/Attachments:

Appendix 1: Food Poverty / Insecurity in West Lothian (Final Report).

Appendix A: Statistical Analysis

Appendix B: Client Quotes

Appendix C: Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Contact Person: Ian Hepburn

E mail: ian.hepburn@westlothian.gov.uk Phone 01506 281089

Craig McCorriston

Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration.

Date: Thursday 23 February 2017

FOOD POVERTY/INSECURITY IN WEST LOTHIAN

**Final Report:
West Lothian Council/Food Poverty Group**

Insight Collective with Niall Alexander

Tel: David Henderson (07810 550217)
Niall Alexander (07799 875864)

Email: info@insightcollective.co.uk
niall9a@hotmail.com

Website: www.insightcollective.co.uk

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Appendix 'A' – Statistical Report

Appendix 'B' – Client Quotes

Appendix 'C' – Self-Assessed Tool



1 Introduction

Background

- 1.1 David Henderson of Insight Collective Ltd and Niall Alexander Consulting were commissioned by West Lothian Council (WLC) and the Food Poverty Group to assess the extent of household food poverty/insecurity in West Lothian. The focus of the study is not on emergency food aid services provided by food banks but on the ongoing struggle of households to access food of sufficient quantity and quality to meet their needs.

Study Objectives

- 1.2 Household food insecurity statistics are not routinely collected at a local level in Scotland or the UK. West Lothian Council is interested in learning about those experiencing food poverty in terms of what their experiences are and what support might help them address these issues both now and in the future. The specific study objectives are to:
- ⦿ establish a robust estimate of how many people in West Lothian experience food poverty and insecurity
 - ⦿ interview staff from organisations who assist those experiencing food poverty and insecurity to identify why this might be the case
 - ⦿ interview a number of people experiencing food poverty and insecurity to identify why this is the case and what additional support they need
 - ⦿ assess whether there are people currently experiencing food poverty and insecurity but who are not accessing any specific support for this
 - ⦿ assess whether people experiencing food insecurity have less healthy diets due to limited budgets
 - ⦿ map existing forms of support for clients and evidence good practice within the local authority and elsewhere

- ④ identify gaps in provision and possible ways to address these.

Methodology

1.3 The proposed methodology had a particular focus on obtaining client experiences. Specific components of the methodology agreed with WLC and the Food Poverty Group included:

- ④ a statistical analysis of needs to supplement existing poverty data
- ④ primary research consisting of interviews with staff in six local organisations about clients followed by face-to-face interviews (with 44 individuals) on their premises – in one instance, in a group of young adults, we supplemented the five interviews with a group discussion
- ④ a light touch, web-based, review of comparative practice elsewhere in the UK and worldwide to identify learning or models of relevance
- ④ a workshop with WLC and local stakeholders to explore the emergent findings and consider the implications for service provision.

1.4 Incentives were offered to assist recruitment but it proved difficult for some of the intermediary organisations to recruit clients. As a result one organisation, West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau, helped to recruit two sets of client groups on our behalf.

1.5 The survey was boosted by the trial of a simple, self-assessment questionnaire distributed by two intermediary organisations to their clients. The purpose was to determine whether there was a value in this approach in terms of raising awareness of food insecurity amongst client caseloads. A total of 23 returns were received. We are grateful to the help of the Dale Hub in Armadale and West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau for trialling the tool.

Report Structure

1.6 This report is divided into the following sections:

- ⦿ **section two;** sets out the meaning of the terms food poverty and food insecurity and goes on to provide an assessment of needs in West Lothian
 - ⦿ **section three;** looks at the findings from the interviews with clients of local organisations representing, very broadly, six specific client groups
 - ⦿ **section four;** looks at what is known of current service provision in West Lothian in relation to food poverty and insecurity and some of the practice lessons from experience elsewhere in the country
 - ⦿ **section five;** draws the above sections together into a set of conclusions and recommendations
- 1.7 Appendix 'A' contains a more detailed list of tables and charts from the statistical review. Appendix 'B' contains the detailed responses from the client survey. Appendix 'C' is the short, one-page self-assessment tool trialled on our behalf by two intermediary organisations.

2 Need Analysis

Food Poverty/Insecurity

- 2.1 The Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) research project, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council, is the largest ever study of poverty conducted in the UK. It defines 'food poverty' as being the inability to afford "Two meals a day for adults, three for children; fresh fruit and vegetables daily for both; meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day for adults or daily for children".
- 2.2 Food insecurity – "the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food"¹ – will affect an even larger proportion of households. The PSE research found that in Scotland "One in four adults in Scotland (25 per cent) has skimped on their own food in the past year so that others in the household may eat. In spite of this, 30,000 children live in families who cannot afford to feed them properly".

Food Poverty/Insecurity and reasons for its growth

- 2.3 This methodology focuses on aspects of food poverty/food insecurity over and above those relating to food banks. The reasons for the growth in foodbank usage, however, provide a structure for considering the growth in food poverty. Some of the most frequently highlighted explanations include:
- ⦿ national and local government policy – particularly in relation to benefits and sanctions
 - ⦿ the cost of living – principally food, fuel and housing
 - ⦿ the increasing prevalence of low-wage, insecure employment
 - ⦿ the prevalence of food banks and alternative emergency food provision resulting in increasing cultural acceptability of use.

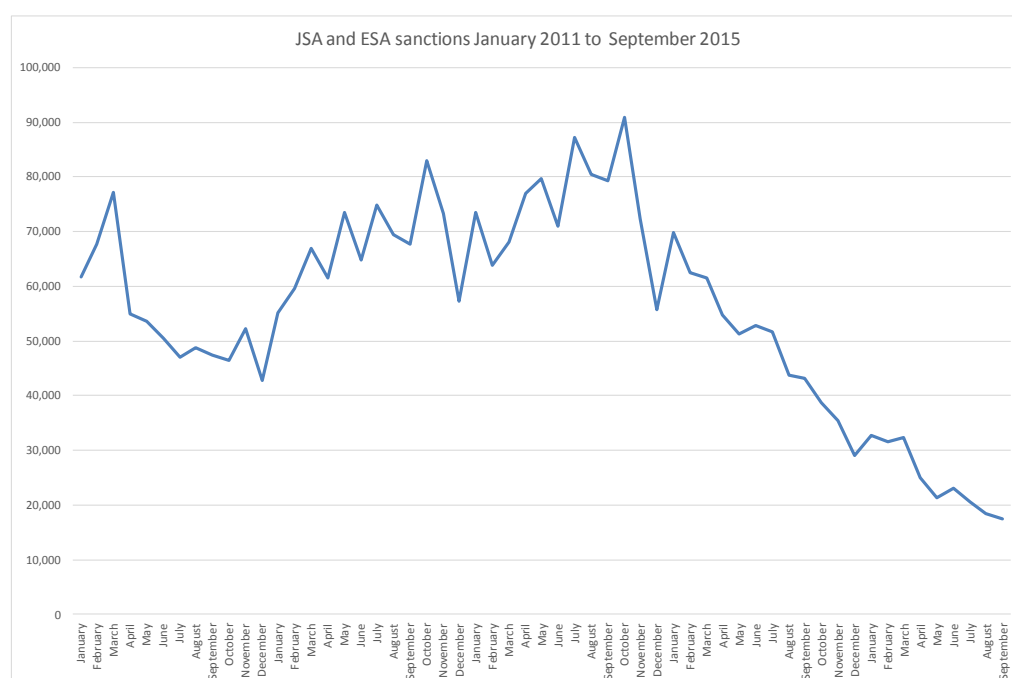
¹ Oxford Dictionary

- 2.4 In this study we examine the role of these factors in the prevalence of food poverty and insecurity in West Lothian. Some are addressed as part of the statistical review below while others are addressed in the interviews with agencies and clients in the subsequent section.

Sanctions and Food Bank Usage

- 2.5 There has been a clear growth in foodbank usage nationally. One of the reasons for that is benefit sanctions which grew significantly during the period of the Coalition Government from 2010 (chart² 2.1).

Chart 2.1: JSA and ESA sanctions, 2011 to 2015

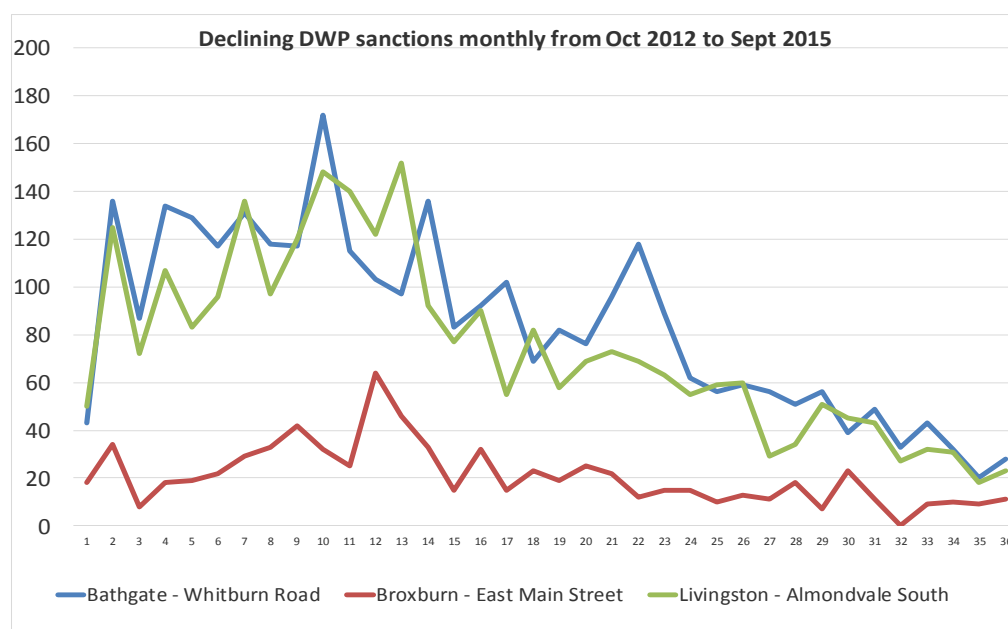


- 2.6 The total number of sanctions applied over the duration of the Coalition Government was 3.6m. The highest year for sanctions was 2013 (average 75,000 per month) followed by 2012 (average 67,500 per month).
- 2.7 The adverse publicity around sanctions along with campaigning around much of the arbitrariness of certain decisions appears to have resulted in a change of emphasis within the DWP, with averages reducing substantially in 2014 (to 49,500/month). In 2015 the average was 23,000 per month.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-december-2015>

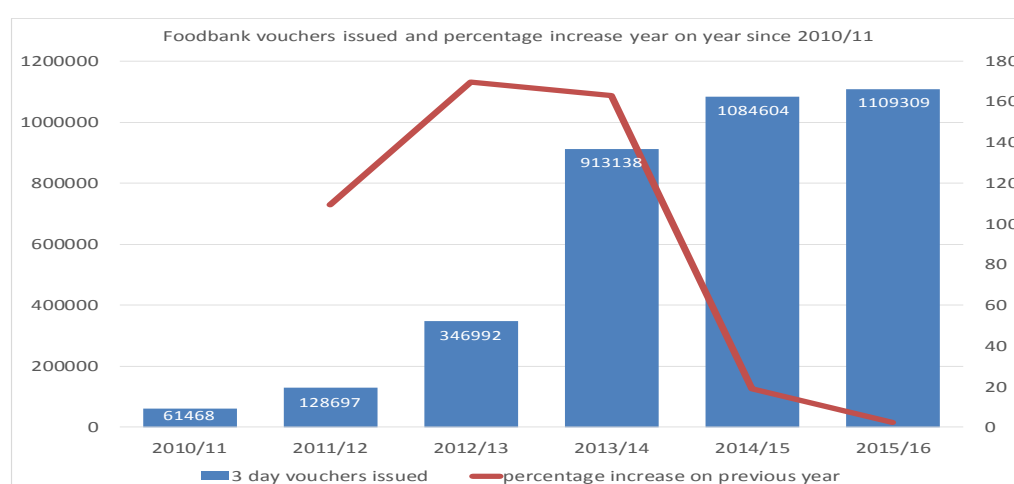
- 2.8 The reduction in sanctions to levels last seen in the year 2000 is mirrored across West Lothian over recent years (chart 2.2). Sanction levels fall from an average of around 340 in 2013 to around a 100 by the end of 2015.

Chart 2.2: Monthly sanctions, 2011 to 2015



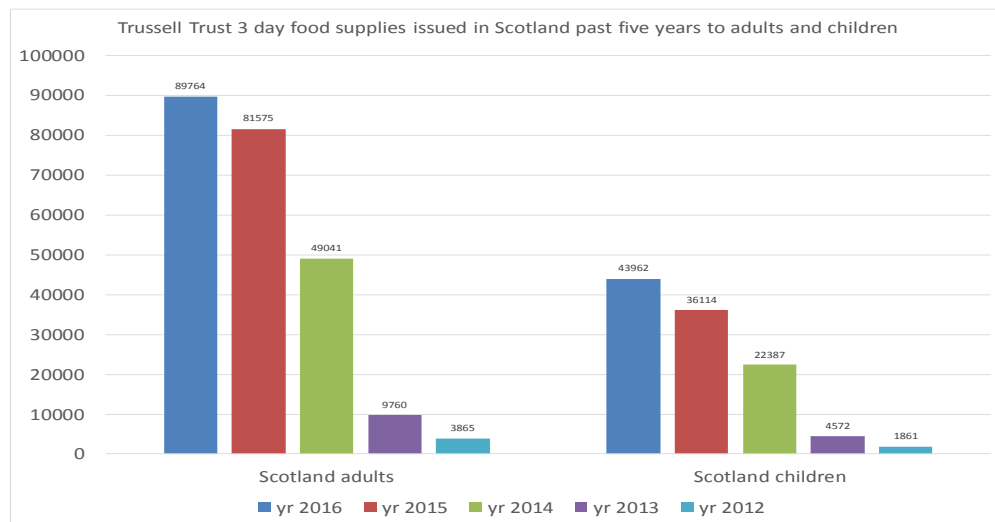
- 2.9 The decline in sanctions since 2013 has resulted in slowing growth in foodbank usage (chart 2.3). The number of users, however, continues to increase.

Chart 2.3: Trussell Trust foodbank vouchers, annual increases from 2010/11



- 2.10 In Scotland in 2016, the Trussell Trust issued 133,726 three-day food supplies (chart 2.4), around 12% of all food supplies issued in the year. This is higher than Scotland's proportion of circa 8.25% of the UK population.

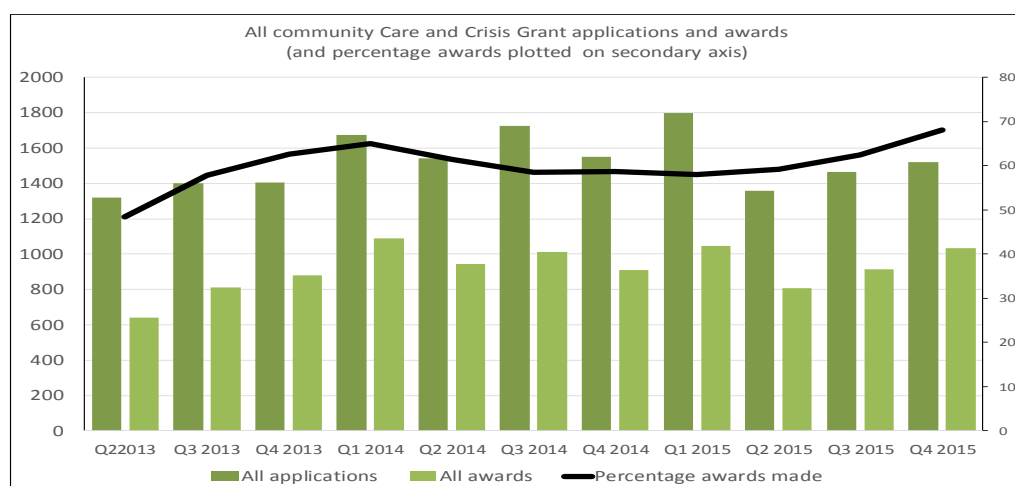
Chart 2.4: Trussell Trust adults and children beneficiaries Scotland, 2012-2015/16



Need in West Lothian

- 2.11 The Scottish Government's response to sanctions and austerity measures includes the introduction of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) consisting of Crisis and Community Care Grants. West Lothian Council figures in these categories over recent years show that over 10,000 awards were made from 16,760 applications from April 2013 to December 31st 2015 (chart 2.5). A total of 3,375 community care grants and 6,710 Crisis grants were awarded.

Chart 2.5 All SWF grants sought and accepted since 2013

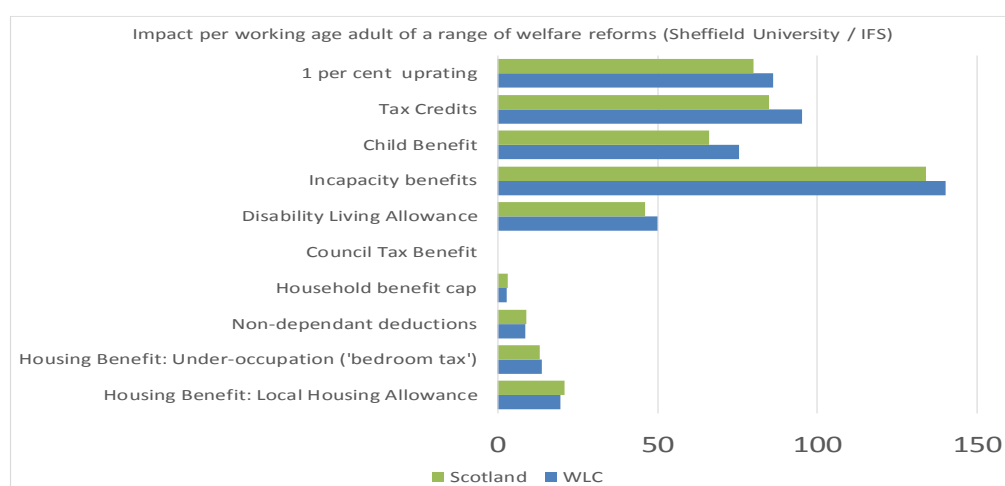


- 2.12 West Lothian Council has awarded either a Crisis Grant or Community Care Grant to 5.8% of the West Lothian Council population. This is lower than the mean average of Scotland's local authorities (7.16%). West Lothian Council

residents that apply for either a Crisis or Community Care Grant have an average 59% chance of success, lower than the Scottish average of 68%.

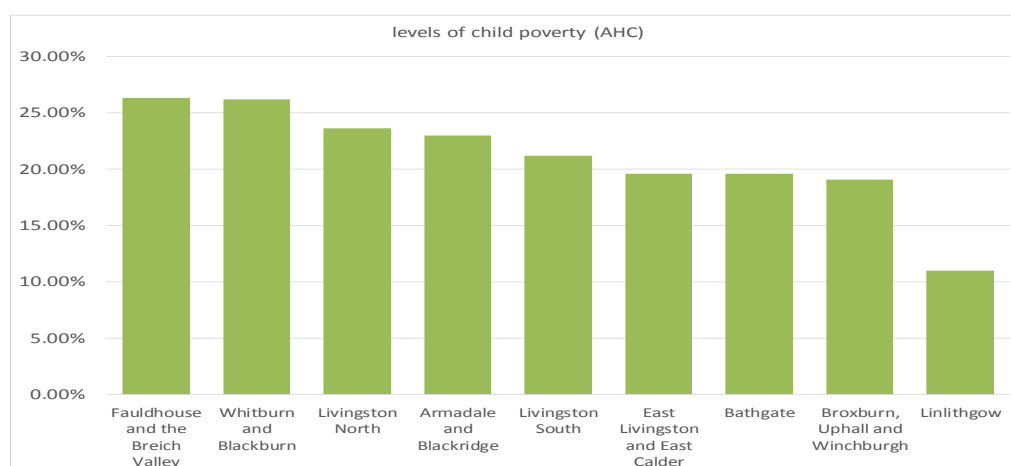
- 2.13 The merger of six benefits (JSA, ESA, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit) into one single Universal Credit payment paid monthly, to one household member in arrears, has been highlighted as a risk to financial wellbeing by anti-poverty groups. In August 2015 there were no reported Universal Credit applicants across West Lothian but by August 2016 there were 1,100 receiving Universal Credit.
- 2.14 Discussions with SWF personnel identify a recent rise in crisis grants to meet food needs, with anecdotal evidence of the increased number of Universal Credit claimants being behind this rise. In the period 1/4/2015 to 31/8/15 £44,138 was paid in crisis grants under the heading of food. A year later, over the same time period, this had risen to £74,560, a rise of 59%. The challenge of monthly budgeting for households, rather than weekly or fortnightly, is likely to lead to budgeting shortfalls.
- 2.15 Research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) revealed the extent of individual welfare reform measures across Scotland's local authorities. The reforms that have the biggest financial impact are not those of the housing benefit cap and the bedroom tax but:
- ⊙ Incapacity benefit changes
 - ⊙ the 1% uprating of benefits
 - ⊙ tax credit changes
 - ⊙ Child Benefit changes
 - ⊙ Disability Living Allowance alterations.
- 2.16 In the top five impact areas, West Lothian is higher than the Scottish average (chart 2.6). Households in West Lothian are, therefore, more likely to be disproportionately affected by these changes.

Chart 2.6 Sheffield Hallam/IFS, Loss (£) per working age adult of welfare reform



2.17 There is a significant locality element to needs in West Lothian leaving some communities particularly vulnerable to food poverty and insecurity. There are, for example, significant levels of child poverty in many of the West Lothian wards with smaller towns and communities. Fauldhouse, Brieich Valley and Whitburn and Blackburn have particularly high levels of child poverty with over one on four experiencing hardship (Chart 2.7).

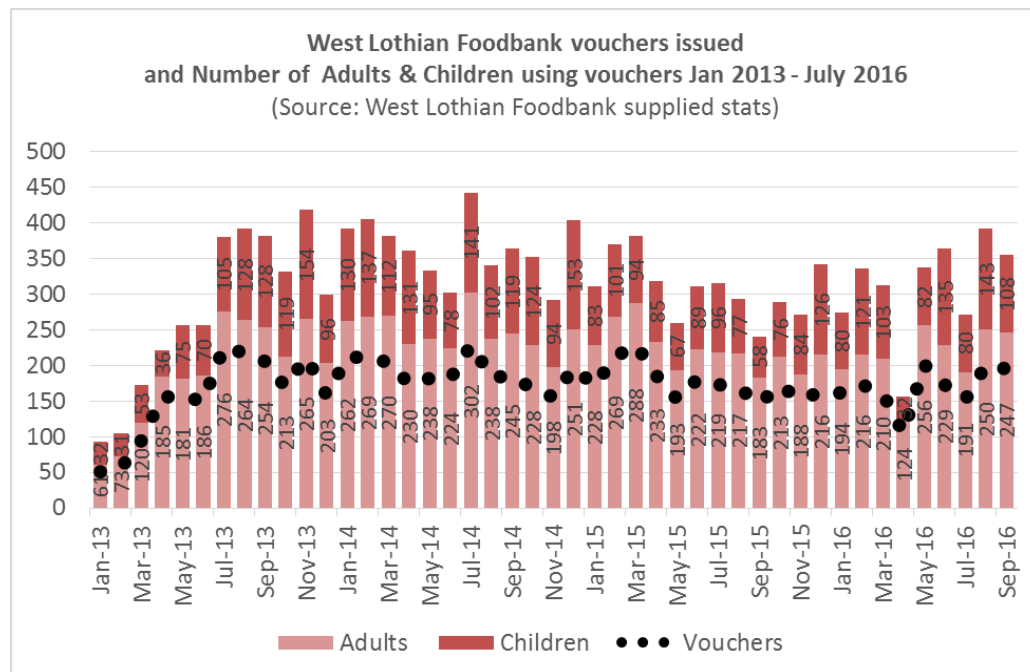
Chart 2.7: Child poverty by ward (WLC)



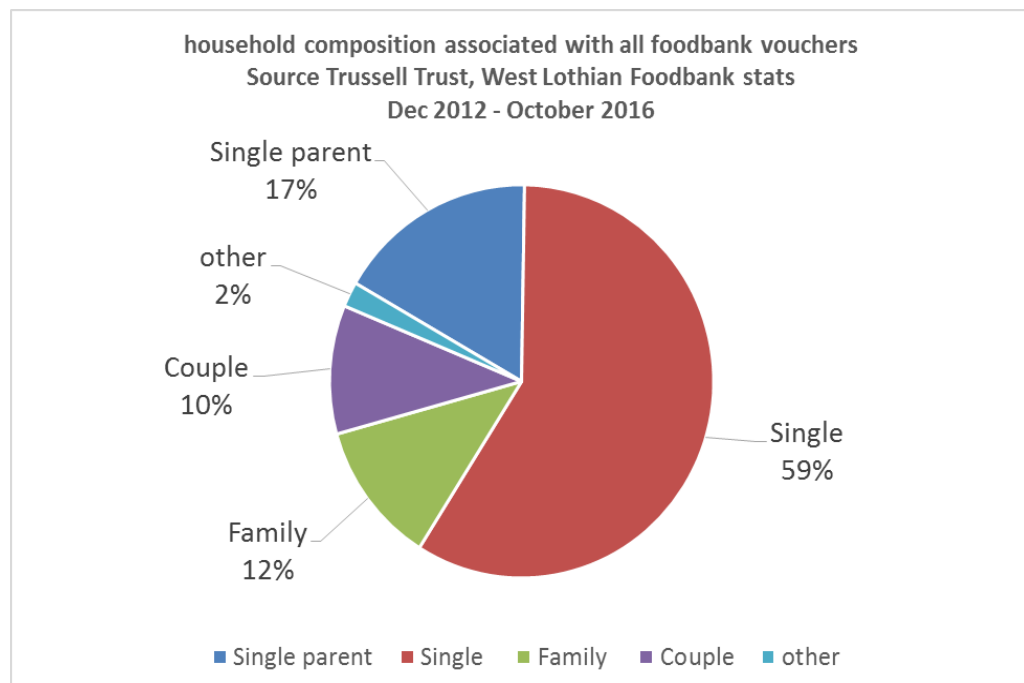
Foodbank usage in West Lothian

2.18 Food bank data for West Lothian for the 12 months to September 2016 shows a total of 1,170 vouchers being issued to households consisting of 2,011 adults and 2,534 children (chart 2.8). There has been a small decrease of 13% in vouchers issued since October 2013.

Chart 2.8: Foodbank statistics for West Lothian

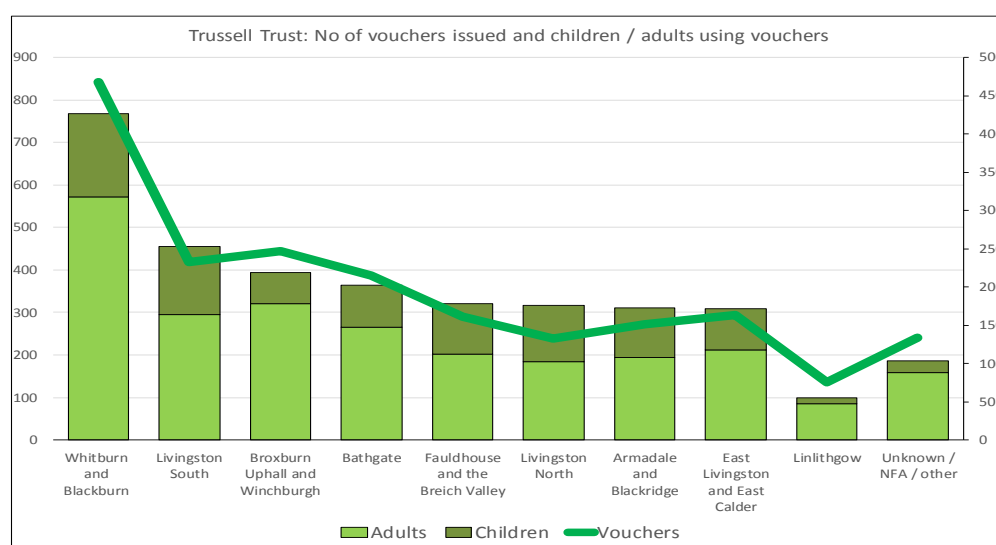


2.19 The West Lothian foodbank statistics (chart 2.9) show that the majority of foodbank clients are single people (59%). Families and single parent households comprise almost a third (29%) of foodbank customers.



2.20 West Lothian Council has identified the distribution of foodbank vouchers by ward level. Whitburn and Blackburn is the area with the greatest propensity for foodbank voucher usage (2.10).

Chart 2.18: Vouchers and beneficiaries, 2015



- 2.21 The Trussell Trust identified the reasons for foodbank attendance in 2016. West Lothian shows a slightly higher incidence of benefit delays, homelessness and domestic violence underlying food poverty than the national averages. This might suggest that more work could be done with agencies in these fields to address issues underlying food poverty.

Emerging need in West Lothian

- 2.22 The population of West Lothian is already vulnerable to price inflation and low wage growth. Gross wage levels for West Lothian are below the Scottish and UK levels. West Lothian data from its Poverty Profile highlights that:
- ⦿ 9,400 West Lothian working households receive Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit, 19% of working households (18% for Scotland)
 - ⦿ an estimated 18% of West Lothian working residents earn below the living wage level of £8.25 per hour compared to 19% for Scotland
 - ⦿ approximately 18% of jobs located within West Lothian pay hourly rates below the living wage level compared to 19% for Scotland
 - ⦿ disposable income per head in West Lothian in 2013 was approximately £15,100 per person and £36,000 per household, below the Scottish levels of £17,300 per person and £38,300 per household respectively.

- 2.23 Another way to assess the extent of potential food poverty/insecurity is to consider demand for credit amongst vulnerable households. A Niall Alexander report on home lending in 2012 found that there was an estimated 8,500 home credit customers in West Lothian (based on Provident Financial Group (PFG) figures). The report identified a further 5,000 payday borrowers, borrowing an average of £260 six times a year.
- 2.24 In the four years since then, PFG has slashed its customer numbers by almost a million across the UK. The customer-type increasingly being declined is those seeking the greatest flexibility of missed payments in their repayment schedule – the poorest and most vulnerable customer. Payday, both online and retail, has similarly slashed customer numbers as a result of government legislation (the payday loan cap in January 2015).
- 2.25 Provision for small sum, flexible credit provision is being removed from the market. Those without employment, with vulnerable credit ratings, often as a result of their tenure status (social housing tenants are twice as likely to be refused mainstream credit)³ will find it problematic, without savings or reliance on friends or family, to access the small sums needed to get by.
- 2.26 The lack of access to affordable and flexible credit and vulnerability of these groups poses particular risks to already vulnerable groups. These include the:
- ⊙ 5,450 lone parent households amongst the 42% households (30,620) headed by a person aged 16-44
 - ⊙ 31% of working population within socio-economic categories 7,8 and 9 jobs (compared to 28% for Scotland)
 - ⊙ one third of households with an income under £20,000 reporting (Scottish Household Survey) that they ‘do not manage well financially’
 - ⊙ numbers with no/low savings – and only three local authorities have a lower saving percentage than West Lothian’s 42%⁴.

³ Sarah Forster & George Wilkinson *Assessing the Impact of Social Housing Rent Payment Data on Credit Scoring and Financial Exclusion* Big Issue Invest May 2010

⁴ SHS “whether respondent has savings” 2010 only N Lanarkshire (38%) Dundee (40%) and Glasgow (37%) had a lower percentage

Assessments of need across West Lothian

2.27 How many people might currently be experiencing food poverty or food insecurity in West Lothian? The numbers will depend on the definitions of food poverty and food insecurity employed. Estimates will vary and range from:

- ⊙ the **2,011 adults and 2,534** children benefitting from Trussell Trust food bank support in the 12 months to September 2016 (although we look at the implications of the survey on this figure in the next section)
- ⊙ another way to estimate need is to use the results of the Poverty and Social Exclusion (PSE) research project and apply these to West Lothian so that;
 - the PSE reports that around 1 in 20 people are unable to afford an adequate diet which, applied to the West Lothian population of 178,550 would amount to **10,713 people**
 - the PSE report that 7% of adults in Scotland lack adequate key food items (two meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables daily; and meat/fish or vegetarian alternative equivalent every other day) – which applied to the West Lothian adult population of 143,448 is **10,041 adults**
 - the PSE report that 3% of households in Scotland with children lack key food items (three meals a day, fresh fruit and vegetables every day; and meat, fish or a vegetarian equivalent at least once a day) which for the 22,806 West Lothian families with children amounts to **684 households with children** (all of whom will have adults skipping meals to enable children to eat better).

2.28 Food poverty and food insecurity in West Lothian is likely to amount to between 3,300 based on the food bank statistics up to over 10,000 people based on national research. The latter figure is probably closer to an accurate assessment.

3 Client Perspectives

Introduction

- 3.1 This section of the report explores the findings of the interviews taken with clients of services at their premises. A total of 44 interviews were carried out. We were assisted by five different organisations in arranging these including (table 3.1):

Table 3.1: Client groups

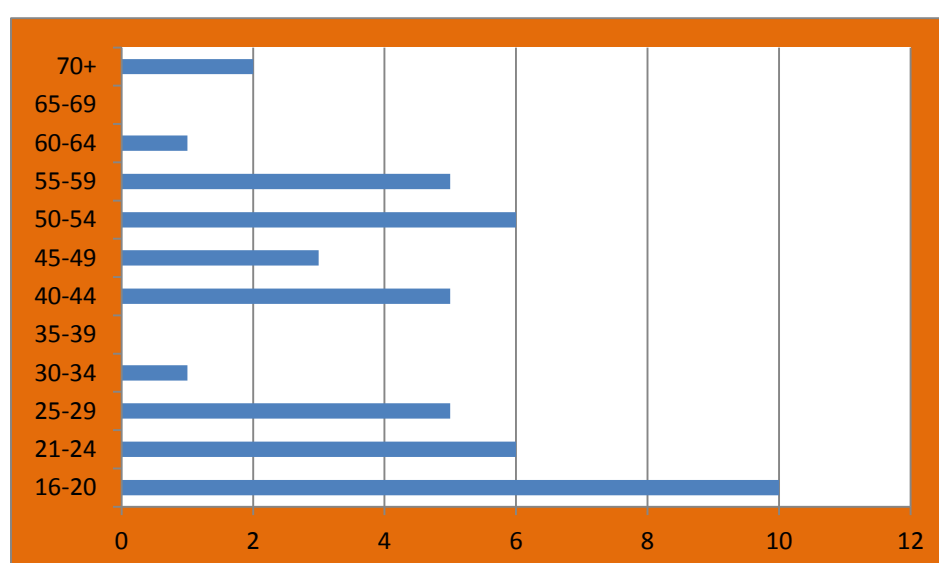
Group	Service	No
Low income workers	West Lothian CAB	8
Older people	West Lothian CAB	8
Tenants in arrears	WESLO	4
Young parents	Family and Community Development	8
Smaller, isolated communities	The Dale Hub (Armada)	9
Young people	More Choices, More Chances (WLC)	7

- 3.2 The questionnaire covered a range of issues. These included:
- ⦿ planning and food shopping patterns
 - ⦿ worries over food and the impact on mental health
 - ⦿ experiences of food insecurity and food poverty and the impacts of this
 - ⦿ the role of services.
- 3.3 It should be noted that the survey is impressionistic and qualitative in nature and not statistically robust. Key points are illustrated using quotes from clients. More quotes are contained in Appendix 'B'.
- 3.4 In addition to the interviews carried with clients we also trialled a shortened version of the questionnaire. The purpose was to determine whether a tool could be developed which might indicate levels of food insecurity amongst clients of clients. The tool was trialled by two organisations resulting in 23 responses. The results of this small pilot are also included later in this section.

Survey participants

- 3.5 The 44 participants consisted of 15 males and 29 females. A broad range of ages participated from 16 through to over 70 (Chart 3.1). There was particularly high representation amongst younger age groups with 10 people being aged between 16 and 20. Younger people were one of the groups explicitly targeted though the intermediate organisations we worked with. Three people were over the age of 60.

Chart 3.1: Survey respondents by age



- 3.6 There was a spread of household types. Fourteen participants were single person households, 12 were couples with young children and nine were single parent households. There were six couples with no children at home.
- 3.7 The vast majority of those interviewed (32) were social rented tenants. One of our target client groups was that of tenants in arrears and this will have boosted the proportion in the sample. Seven owned their own home (or had a mortgage). At least two people were in supported accommodation with the others renting privately or, in one case, living with friends.

Planning and shopping patterns

- 3.8 The survey asked participants about their shopping habits. We asked whether people made a list before they went shopping as an indicator of their forward

planning (and budgeting skills). The most significant proportion (20) never made a list while nine occasionally did so. Eight frequently did so.

- 3.9 In the interviews we explored some of the reasons behind why people did not make lists which might help with budgeting and reducing the costs. People generally understand the value of making a list but do not always carry it out for a variety of reasons:

“I’ll buy more if I don’t make a list”.

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

“Always make a list, if I don’t then I’ll spend more”.

...male, 40-44, couple with dependents

“Yes, It’s cheaper when you make a list, I’m careful in what I put in basket. Kids still like brands like Weetabix but I get the cheap stuff for pasta and beans. I’m finding it really tough since I lost my job”.

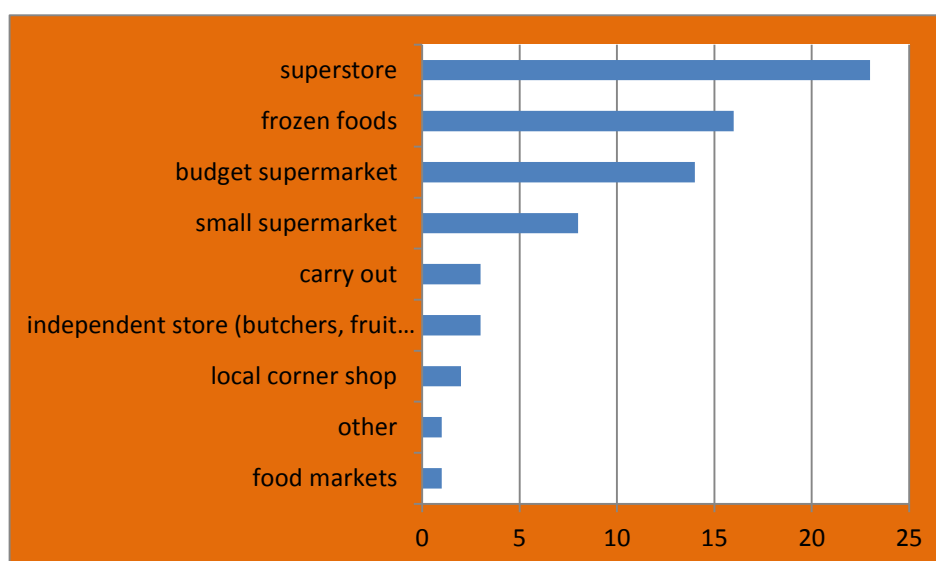
...female, 40-44, couple with dependents

“I should make a list ‘cos it helps; plan my meals, not buy random stuff. I’d find a budgeting class useful if I could come”.

...female 25-29 single

- 3.10 The last point on budgeting came up on several occasions. In the few instances where people received help with budgeting this was highly valued and felt to have made a difference. In most instances it was young clients who had received this support. Other client groups, based upon our interviews, would also benefit from help with budgeting.
- 3.11 The survey explored when and where people do their shopping (Chart 3.1). The vast majority (29) do their main shopping on a weekly or fortnightly basis – the numbers being almost evenly split between the two. Fourteen do so on an almost daily basis while four (often with large freezers) do a monthly shop.
- 3.12 The superstores (23 people) are the main shopping location for most people. Frozen food outlets (16 people) and budget supermarkets (14) are also frequently used. Independent/speciality food outlets are less likely to be used.

Chart 3.1: Where I mainly shop



3.13 Participants generally know where the cheapest food is and where the healthier options are. People's shopping habits and choices, however, are dictated by circumstances as well as income - where they live, access to transport, physical capacity to carry shopping are just some of the issues which determine where people shop and how often they do so:

"I used to just go to ASDA, didn't really think about it, now I shop at Lidl, it's really good, I buy my links sausage from Lidl when I used to go to butcher".

...female, 40-44, couple with dependents

"B&M is good and cheap, ASDA fresh stuff is good, I use £30 home delivery from Iceland cos it's easier and I can then go onto other shops".

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"I always look at the price of stuff; Tesco deals are in your face! Most days I use fresh stuff".

...female, 21-24m single parent

"I go to supermarket at 2.30 when they start reducing stuff, but if you go too late most of it is gone".

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"When the stuff is reduced we look at it. I tend to make a lot of macaroni and box it and freeze it".

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

Worries about food

- 3.14 There is increasing recognition of the link between food and positive mental wellbeing. The Mental Health Foundation notes⁵ “As well as its impact on short and long-term mental health, the evidence indicates that food plays an important contributing role in the development, management and prevention of specific mental health problems such as depression, schizophrenia, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and Alzheimer’s disease”.
- 3.15 We were interested in the potential impact anxieties over managing food on a day to day basis might have upon participants. We asked participants whether they worried about food poverty or food insecurity (using different terminology) to determine to what extent worrying about access to food, or food of sufficient quality, was a factor in their lives.
- 3.16 Over two thirds of the participants have had cause to worry about not having enough food (70%) or about the quality of food (61%) they consume either occasionally or frequently in the last 12 months (table 3.2). The numbers are not statistically robust but suggest high levels of anxiety in many households. We believe, based upon the interviews, that the figures are an underestimate as some interviewees, particularly males, do not like to admit to worrying.

Table 3.2: In the last 12 months I have worried about..

Group	Not having enough food	The quality of food
Never	13	17
Occasionally	15	10
Frequently	16	17
Total	44	44

- 3.17 Although a slightly lower proportion worry about the quality of food they consume the proportion remains high. This would suggest that many clients are aware that their food choices are not as healthy and nutritious as they would like them to be but make sacrifices in order to manage on tight budgets.

⁵ ‘Feeding Minds – the Impact of Food on Mental Health’; The Mental Health Foundation, 2006

- 3.18 Many of the participants worried as much for family members as themselves. Past experiences of going without food in harder years or in childhood are also a factor. It is apparent from some of the interviews that being well provisioned at home provides a sense of stability which, when threatened, can lead to high levels of anxiousness.

“When I get the £300 I get my food shop, a full-on shop, when I was wee there was nothing. I want my kids to have varieties; having stuff in the cupboards is very important to me”.

...female, 21-24 single parent

It’s important to me to have food in the house, in the cupboards, I’ve never had empty cupboards”.

...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

“I feel a lot better when I know there is food so the wee man can have enough to eat”.

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

“I stress about food; I’m paying too much to Provident £15/week trying to stop it all”.

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

“I pretend to my sister that I’ve eaten, and I don’t want to worry my son. I tell him I’m fine. He looks in my cupboard and he shouts at me and says “you should have told me” he then leaves me food, not money”.

...female, 55-59 single

Food poverty, insecurity and its effects

- 3.19 We asked participants about their experiences of food poverty or food insecurity in the past year. Participants were asked if they had experienced not having enough food or cutting back on the quality of food to get by, specifically due to lack of money. The majority had – 26 or 60% experiencing not having enough to eat and the same proportion having cut back on the quality of food, and more frequently, to get by (table 3.3).

Table 3.3: In the last 12 months I or someone in my household had...

Group	Not enough food to eat	To reduce the quality of our food
Never	18	16
<i>Occasionally</i>	15	9
<i>Frequently</i>	11	17
Total	44	26
No (%) experiencing food pov/insec.	26 or 60%	26 or 60%

- 3.20 The numbers are likely to be an underestimate. Interviewees are inclined to play down the nature of their experiences. The results suggest, however, that food poverty and insecurity are frequent occurrences in the lives of the clients of key services in West Lothian. Client experiences are not 'one-off' but rather an ongoing outcome of their labour market position, subject to changes in benefits, managing on low and insecure incomes and being vulnerable to the impact of unexpected outgoings.
- 3.21 The 26 people experiencing food poverty or food insecurity were asked whether they had attended a food bank in the last 12 months or been referred to one. While 12 had attended a food bank, a further 14 had not been referred or attended a food bank in spite of experiencing food poverty or food insecurity – 117% higher than the 12 in receipt of food bank assistance
- 3.22 The numbers in our survey are small and cannot be considered robust. They can be used, however, to provide a very crude indication of 'unmet need'.
- 3.23 If the percentage of those experiencing food poverty/insecurity over and above the proportion accessing a foodbank (117%) is applied to the 4,545 adults and children in receipt of food vouchers in West Lothian, **then the true number of adults/children experiencing food poverty/insecurity will be around 9,862 people** – consistent with the numbers in the PSE research.

Contributory factors

- 3.24 We explored the factors behind these experiences. The reasons were many and varied but frequently arose from the following factors:

- ⊙ system failures - delays in payments is a frequently identified factor, waiting for travel costs to be reimbursed etc
- ⊙ making benefit or wages last until the next payment day – participants frequently talk about struggling on a regular basis and missing meals
- ⊙ relationship changes or transitions are a frequently cited factor including:
 - marriage and relationship breakdown and the change in income patterns or additional costs e.g. removal costs, involved
 - younger people moving out of the family home into a tenancy
 - health factors resulting in changed work and home circumstances
 - changing work circumstances – one person losing his job, temporarily, as a result of an accident.
- ⊙ unanticipated expenses – mobile phone bills being frequently identified
- ⊙ irregular payment patterns and the effect of zero hours contracts for people in low paid and insecure employment is a factor.

3.25 Some of the quotes illustrate the range of reasons why people experience food poverty and food insecurity. These are grouped below:

System failures:

“Didn’t realise we could get benefit, there’s not enough (*WESLO Adviser*) around”.
...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

“I took out a DWP loan (£800) they took first payment before I thought they would, left me with nothing”.
...male, 40-44, couple with dependents

“I got divorced and had to move home. Extra costs for furniture were made worse by payment delays. Took two months to get benefits sorted out. I used to get up at 3am to go to the (supermarket) food skips. I have no family here, who can I turn to?”.
...male, 50-59

“I always find it hard at end of the week when my benefits run out. Especially in winter time because of fuel bills”.
.....male, 45-49

Relationship and other life transitions:

“When my parents split up our income became quite hard and we often struggled to eat. Now I live in supported accommodation but it’s hard to make my money last”.
... male, 16-20

"Dad pays us nothing. If we struggle we have to tap my papa".
...female, 16-20

"Split from my wife and family and have been depressed and not coping. I had to move into a new place and furnish it".

... male, 50-59

"We came to Scotland from (undisclosed country) and although I am a trained chef I cannot work as I need to look after my mother. We are paying out lots of costs, like travel to Edinburgh, to try to get passports".

...female, 60-64 (questions answered by her daughter)

"Fleeing a violent partner, staying in a refuge and having to set up a new home".

...female, 25-29, single no dependents

Health:

"I stopped working because of my health and to care for my husband. I didn't know how or what to claim, assumed we couldn't. We only had the bare necessities".

...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"I was hospitalised during this time (*Dec-Mar awaiting benefit reimbursement*) it affected my health, pneumonia, I was rundown, stressed, worried that my house would be taken away. Awful. I was devastated. Became more and more anxious".

...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"I was in a car accident which damaged my wrist. It brought on arthritis and nobody believes it. I'm in a lower paying job and am short at the end of each month".

...male, 50-54, single no dependents

Employment change:

"I worry when it comes to money, I was so worried, stress, crying, worry, never thought about it before but then, stroke, lost my job, suddenly, you're there..."

...female, 40-44, couple with dependents

"I found it hard when I finished at the Council, no one told me anything. I didn't know I could claim, if it wasn't for WESLO I don't know what I would have done".

...female, 40-44, couple with dependents

"I stopped working because of my health, and to care for my husband. I didn't know how or what to claim, assumed we couldn't. We only had the bare necessities"

...female 50-54, couple with one dependent

Low income, unstable work:

"Mum gets paid weekly as a cleaner. She had problems when they switched to monthly. Even weekly though, if her work pay less she gets into difficulty".

...male, 16-20

Impacts of food poverty and food insecurity

- 3.26 We asked whether food poverty/insecurity had resulted in people giving up essential items to allow them to eat. All those experiencing food poverty/insecurity had given up other things to pay for food, including:

- going without food so others in the household can eat well was a frequently identified experience (see quotes below)
- delaying TV or mobile phone payments
- cutting back on days out (one young participant no longer being able to attend cultural activities with his mum)
- cutting back on clothing – another young participant had needed to buy new shoes for £20 but had given them up to pay for food
- missing JSA appointments to pay for food.

"I don't smoke I don't drink, if I planned a night out and was running out of money for food then I'd tap my pals for my children (to eat)".

...female, 21-24, single with dependents

"There are times when I will have a piece of toast so he can have enough".

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"We're getting by, not able to jump in car or go out for lunch with my daughter when I want to because I don't want my daughter to pay for me".

...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"I would give up food for me not for my kids; I had to buy half shop in order to get my daughter to hospital in Kilmarnock. Me and my partner stayed for three nights, we had to sleep and eat so I skipped meals there".

...female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"Sometimes I worry that I don't have enough to feed the kids; if I've not got enough for myself I make sure that my weans are fed"

...female 40-44 single with dependants

3.27 There are other impacts arising from people's experiences of food poverty and insecurity. "Food related ill health is responsible for about 10% of morbidity and mortality in the UK and costs the NHS about £6 billion annually⁶ and contributes to the leading causes of attributable global mortality such as high blood glucose, high blood pressure, and childhood underweight, overweight and obesity"⁷8.

⁶ Scarborough P, Rayner M. 2005 The burden of food related ill health in the UK *Journal of Epidemiological Community Health*; 59:1054-1057 <http://jech.bmj.com/content/59/12/1054.full#sec-5>

⁷ World Health Organisation. 2009. Global Health Risks Mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks.

3.28 We asked about the impacts on mental and physical health arising out of their experiences of food poverty and food insecurity. One participant, for example, told us that he did not miss meals or cut back on quality but later explained that he ate mostly toast. The most commonly identified impacts included:

- ⦿ six people had experience of skipping meals
- ⦿ five people had on occasions not had enough food in their home to eat
- ⦿ five people had gone a whole day without food
- ⦿ five people had suffered poor health affected by lack of food
- ⦿ three people reported having lost weight.

3.29 We asked participants about the next year of their lives and whether they thought that their experiences would be repeated. Twenty of those interviewed – of those experiencing food poverty or food insecurity – felt that it was ‘very likely’ (10) or ‘possible’ (10). Some participants explained what food poverty and food insecurity meant to them in their own words:

“I was getting sair heids from drinking coffee all the time and not eating”.
...female, 45-49, couple with dependents

“Already on medication for depression and anxiety. I often feel ill as a result of worrying about not having enough food. I don’t go out so much as I should when I lack food”.
...female, 40-44, single no dependents

“It affected my ability to sleep. Made my depression and anxiety worse some days I can plan my food really well but when depression kicks in I cannot leave the house for up to 3 days and sometimes I can’t even face asking neighbours or friends for help”.
...female, 25-29, single no dependents

“It has added to our depression. Wife is severely depressed and has even lost interest in her garden because she thinks we will lose our home. We don’t go out and socialise anymore. I’ve had to learn to get by on a fiver a day for food but we will not let our dog suffer. We just will not”.
...male, 55-59, couple no dependents

“I feel guilty not being able to look after my own mother”.
... daughter on behalf of her mother, 60-64, couple no dependents

“I feel listless, energyless. I don’t want to get out of bed some days”.
...male, 55-59, single with dependents

Services

- 3.30 We asked participants about their experiences of working with services, including foodbanks. Twelve participants had used a foodbank in the last 12 months. It was clear from the interviews that some clients in need of assistance would be reluctant to use a foodbank seeing it as being a service for homeless people, for families or people 'worse off' than themselves.
- 3.31 Some participants talked about the 'humbling' nature of having to access a foodbank for the first time, believing it to be something for 'other people'. When people did access a foodbank their experience of the volunteers involved was generally a very positive one and several acknowledged the relief felt that they would have some food in their home.
- 3.32 A few participants who had been referred, reflecting back, were surprised that it had taken so long to be referred. Not all of the services working with vulnerable clients are aware of how food banks operate. One participant had been referred by West Lothian CAB but wondered why Jobcentre Plus had not suggested it. Another client, with diabetes, while pleased of the help, had found the food unsuitable for his diet.
- 3.33 Other non-foodbank services have an important role to play. Social workers and key workers are instrumental in clients being able to access food bank vouchers or budgeting skills. Budgeting support is identified as helpful by several participants. Two other suggestions included:
- ⦿ more work on cooking skills in schools
 - ⦿ more diverse delivery options for older people who, it is argued, experience greater levels of stigma in accessing assistance.

Client skills and capacity

- 3.34 We asked participants about their cooking skills. In general people tended to rate their cooking skills positively. Only 12 people, for example, had never *not*

purchased food because they did not know how to cook it. The conversations, however, suggested a more varied range of cooking skills in practice.

- 3.35 Some younger participants struggled with cooking skills but several had very good skills. Some had benefited from classes at college as part of skills programmes and clearly took pride in their new skills. It was also true that some of the other groups, older men and some parents with children at home, struggled with cooking and in several households cooking skills were limited to using a microwave to reheat frozen food.
- 3.36 Research of this kind will tend to focus on the 'deficits' – why people struggle. We found evidence of many strengths amongst the people interviewed both in terms of their capacity to get by in spite of frequent challenges and in terms of their cooking skills.

"I can cook, I understand quality and price, I don't buy meat just cos it's cheap!".
...female, 21-24, single with dependents

"I'm quite good curries, use a slow cooker, started doing that recently".
...male, 40-44, couple with dependents

"I buy from the butchers, I wouldn't buy processed meat –rubbery chicken is not for me, quality not quantity, you want to eat the right stuff, but it's not easy".
...female 25-29 single

"I usually get £10, 3 item packs of mince and make a series of dishes, I make them in bulk and freeze them".
...female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"My mums always told me about cooking, and to be careful with stuff like chicken. I make homemade curry, soup and macaroni".
...female 20-25, couple with one dependent

"I can do chicken stir fries. My mum taught me some meals. She is getting training from a support agency to make chicken curry".
...female, 16-20, single no dependents

"I went on a cookery course. I wasn't happy with the food I was eating compared to what my mum used to make and so went on a college course for five months".
...male, 45-49, single no dependents

Self-assessed pilot

- 3.37 In addition to the interviews we asked two organisations – the Dale Hub in Armadale and West Lothian Citizens Advice Bureau – to trial a shortened, self-assessment questionnaire for their clients. The intention was to determine whether there is a value in a tool which can be shared by West Lothian organisations to assess levels of food insecurity (rather than food poverty) which might exist amongst clients.
- 3.38 A total of 23 questionnaires were completed. The questions were designed to be simple and easy to respond to. They provide an indication of potential need which might go unnoticed depending on the nature of the service in question. Some of the findings are:
- ⦿ seven of the 23 people completing the self-assessment tool had occasionally or frequently been anxious about having enough food in the last 12 months
 - ⦿ nine of the 23 had reason to be occasionally or frequently concerned about the nutritional value of their food in the last 12 months
 - ⦿ five had experience of not having had enough food in the house in the last 12 months
 - ⦿ ten had reduced the quality and nutritional value of their food by some degree in the last year
 - ⦿ five had taken difficult decisions in the last 12 months to enable them to feed their household.
- 3.39 The self-assessment questionnaires are quick and easy for clients to complete. The questions, with hindsight, are perhaps repetitive and should be adapted to provide a richer picture, including other aspects of food poverty and insecurity e.g. cooking skills. We also feel that they under-represent people's experiences of hardship to a degree. If adapted and applied in a more targeted fashion, however, the results would help some organisations identify the scale of the challenges facing clients.

4 Services

Background

- 4.1 This section looks at the nature of service provision in West Lothian. Our experience is limited to the small number of organisations we contacted to recruit clients for the survey. The section also looks at experience from elsewhere in the UK and the world to identify approaches of relevance.
- 4.2 The limitations of the response to food poverty and insecurity in the UK are set out in a report by the University of Warwick⁹. The article identifies an absence of 'rights based' approaches which inform and empower households, communities and organisations about their rights to access good quality nutritious food in a quantity sufficient for their daily needs.
- 4.3 There are various UN obligations relating to governments' role in ensuring access to food in terms of both quantity and nutritional value. Article 11, for example, states that "the broader right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, has physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement". The application of Article 11 places an obligation on states to 'respect', 'protect' and 'fulfil or facilitate' people's access to and use of food.
- 4.4 The Warwick report states "... the State ...seems to assume what Riches (1996) describes as fractured responsibility for 'food poverty and insecurity', encouraging local level ...or non-State actors to deal with local problems on a piecemeal basis. In (the UK)... civil society is increasingly involved in local level food interventions which act 'downstream' on issues such as skills and budgeting or access to affordable healthy foods through volunteer-run cooperatives or small shops, rather than 'upstream' in improving wages, job security or neighbourhoods".

⁹ 'Rights Based Approaches to Addressing Food Poverty and Food Insecurity in Ireland and UK'; University of Warwick, 2012

Learning from Local services

- 4.5 The interviews with services identified learning points worth considering for agencies to address the issues raised in the report. These are set out below.

Money advice

- 4.6 Money advice is one of the factors behind some instances of food poverty/insecurity. The difficulties for some communities and some client groups (outwith those assisted by specific projects) in accessing money advice outside the Money Advice Shop in Bathgate was noted by some services.

Healthy Start Vouchers

- 4.7 Healthy Start Vouchers are available to mothers who are pregnant or who have children under the age of four. The vouchers are highly valued by those who receive them, allowing weekly purchase of fresh fruit and vegetables and infant formula milk. We were told, however, by interviewees that some retailers were abusing the service, accepting the vouchers for non-permissible goods, not providing the full value of the voucher and of non-approved retailers accepting the vouchers for unauthorised goods.

Food banks

- 4.8 Interviewees discussed the value of food banks. One service estimated that around a quarter of clients would not attend because of stigma. Other services were interested in finding out more about how food banks operated and whether their clients might be eligible or whether they could be a distributor of vouchers. Access could be improved for some organisations if there were stronger local information networks.
- 4.9 The West Lothian foodbanks work with WLC to support customers experiencing persistent food poverty. While food vouchers are limited to three in any six month period, customers with enduring financial difficulties are encouraged to engage with advice services both in the immediate and longer term through the provision of emergency food parcels, ongoing support from a dedicated case worker, home visits and onward referrals.

Community food courses/activities

- 4.10 Some interviewees identified the value of activity in community settings. The Food Train, West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network and Dale Hub have delivered these in the past. Provision is sporadic and limited and there is scope for a more sustained and targeted approach for a range of client types.

Staff/volunteer understanding of clients

- 4.11 Some services know their clients well and have a good understanding of their needs. The client interviews highlighted the value of 'key worker' services – usually for younger people – which enable staff effective in its application to identify need, prompt clients to act and source support services.
- 4.12 Others, necessarily, have more limited interventions and a less rounded understanding of clients' needs and capacities. Awareness of food poverty, food insecurity and client capacity for cooking – either in terms of equipment or skills – can often be missing and needs go unidentified. There may be scope for inter-agency training around this to improve spotting and referring.

Working with retailers

- 4.13 At least one of the organisations we visited was involved in the Fareshare (Cyrenians) and Tesco's Foodcloud schemes. Fareshare is a national franchise delivered in Edinburgh and the Lothians through Cyrenians. Members pay a fee to have food, provided by major retailers, delivered to vulnerable clients. Foodcloud is an app, piloted by Tesco's, where participating charities are informed of available surplus foods which they can uplift.
- 4.14 We have no information on the uptake of the schemes in West Lothian but this may be an area where collective action by WLC and partners might be used to good effect. Mapping current take-up, promoting awareness of the scheme and looking at shared membership options might be worth exploring.

Suggestions

- 4.15 One suggestion made was for a mobile service, a bus, delivering community food activities in remote and rural communities where service provision is

limited and needs may be highest. West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network is exploring this model but other services may be interested. The mobile unit could be used in partnership with other advice and information services.

Lessons from elsewhere

- 4.16 We explored other food poverty initiatives across the UK, Europe and the rest of the world. There are no exact matches with the West Lothian context but the review did identify a number of initiatives that offered insights into alternative delivery models. The key features are summarised (table 4.1).

Table 4.1: Other initiatives

Name	Key Features
North Wales Housing with Fareshare	Involves delivery of dried/tinned food to hostels and families in social housing – involving a £5 fee for a pack valued at circa £20
Community Shop	Social enterprise (in Goldthorpe) run retail store involving food redistribution for 500 subscribed members on benefits – they also receive Key Worker support from in-shop volunteers
Margaret Blackwood Food Co-ops	Four food co-operatives (2 in Aberdeen/2 in Edinburgh) offering bread, milk, eggs, fruit and veg supporting local residents who find it hard to shop funded through CFHS's small grant scheme
Linthouse Housing Association	Community growing group allowing local people to take what they need from the garden improving access to fruit and veg – run by volunteers and with 60 members
Cyrenians Good Food with Fareshare	A Fareshare scheme in which as well as deliveries members can also buy in to cooking classes, healthy eating activities, training and work experience through social enterprises
East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op	Partnership between Hillhead Housing Association and Volunteer Centre offering food co-ops open 3 hours a week with fresh fruit/veg funded by Wider Role – offers cooking demos, recipe cards, nutrition sessions, REHIS training and Train the Trainer programmes to extend learning into other community groups
The East Ate (TEA)	Operating in East Glasgow. A community project aimed at changing people's attitudes to growing and eating. Runs a monthly 'pay-what-you-feel' dinner with a food bank involving locally grown produce and a café project to help pass on food skills between generations.
Real Food Exeter	A community owned store with a shop, café, takeaway and bakery owned by its 300 members and funded through a community share issue
Stroud Co	A producer and consumer owned buying group with over 200 members ordering weekly online with supplies delivered to a 'food hub' at a local school

Just Food in New York	Connects communities to local farms to help local communities produce their own foods and supporting farmers markets and farm-to-food pantry programmes
Biocoop in France	A national organic distribution co-operative with over 10,000 members linking producers to consumers through a network of shops united as a federation and operating as local franchises
Gruppo di Acquisto Solidale network in Italy	Bottom up national network which has developed since the 1990s buying in bulk from individual farmers, producers and larger-scale wholesalers

4.17 The learning from other areas illustrates the range of models which exist – some of which may offer lessons of interest for West Lothian. Key features which might be highlighted include:

- ⊙ food co-operatives (e.g. Margaret Blackwood and Linthouse) which bring food producers and consumers into contact
- ⊙ offering cooking workshops in addition to deliveries such (e.g. the Cyrenians Good Food approach)
- ⊙ models which incorporate volunteers and training programmes to extend learning about food into the community through local groups (e.g. East Dunbartonshire Food Co-op)
- ⊙ larger-scale bulk purchasing models as seen in France, Italy and Japan.

4.18 Another concept of relevance to West Lothian is that of the Food Hub. The Food Hub is a model promoted by Flourish amongst other organisations. The East Ate project in Bridgeton, Glasgow offers an example as does the Broomhouse Health Strategy Group with its healthy food shop, community activities aimed at children and families and sessions on cooking skills. There are many good community organisations in West Lothian which could fulfil this role and be supported to become a network of community food hubs.

4.19 One of the strengths of developing a network of community food hubs is that they offer the potential to work with other networks. Local growers organisations and allotments can be used to source food or to encourage interest in local food production options. Similarly community cafes can be involved to offer cooking workshops and promote low-cost, healthier eating.

Food-related services in West Lothian

4.20 We reviewed a mapping exercise of local services undertaken by WLC to identify services that offer assistance with food. Those identified include:

- ⦿ the Dale Hub in Armadale which runs a healthy eating group
- ⦿ the West Lothian Financial Inclusion Network which has delivered community food sessions in the past and is keen to do so again
- ⦿ the Boghall Drop-in Centre offering courses/classes on healthy eating
- ⦿ Craigshill and Dedridge Good Neighbour Networks which run lunch clubs for isolated people in the community
- ⦿ West Lothian Youth Action Project with its kitchen and cooking classes
- ⦿ Linlithgow has several projects - Linlithgow Link has a café for isolated and vulnerable individuals, the Caring Café for people with dementia and carers and the 1st Step Recovery Café for people tackling addictions
- ⦿ Food Train West Lothian which delivers food to older people throughout West Lothian
- ⦿ the Braid House Day Centre for older people in Livingston offering meals prepared on the premises
- ⦿ there are ten Trussell Trust Foodbanks in West Lothian covering Whitburn, Livingston, Linlithgow, Boghall, Broxburn, Bathgate and Blackburn and Seafield – there is at least one independent food bank operated by a church in Bathgate
- ⦿ around 17 known lunch clubs and community cafes.

4.21 The list is not comprehensive, but it provides a starting point around which could be developed a network of engaged organisations, including community cafes, growers associations etc. This could be mapped for workers to help signpost clients, used to develop the community food hub concept and developed as a resource in order to promote partnership schemes e.g. suspended coffee initiatives.

5 Conclusions and Recommendations

Background

- 5.1 Food poverty is defined as the inability to afford “Two meals a day for adults, three for children; fresh fruit and vegetables daily for both; meat, fish or vegetarian equivalent every other day for adults or daily for children” while food insecurity is “the state of being without reliable access to a sufficient quantity of affordable, nutritious food”.
- 5.2 West Lothian Council and its partners commissioned consultancy support to explore food poverty and food insecurity in greater depth in West Lothian. This was carried out by means of a statistical analysis, interviews with a small selection of service providers, interviews with clients (44) and the piloting of a self-assessment tool (23 returns). It also included a review of practice elsewhere and a yet to be held workshop with key stakeholders,

Key findings

- 5.3 One of the major findings from the study is the recurrent and on-going nature of food poverty and food security for those experiencing it. One-off or short-term interventions are likely to be ineffective. Services working with vulnerable clients need to be aware that the nature of the benefits system and the increase in low wage, insecure employment and rising food/utility costs are the main factors behind food poverty and insecurity, not client capacity.
- 5.4 Service providers need to be aware that seemingly ‘small’ factors e.g. delays in payments, travel costs, the need to claim back expenses for travel etc have implications for people’s capacity to manage limited budgets. This can mean the difference between food at the end of the week or none.
- 5.5 The specific findings to emerge from the work are as follows. The statistical review shows that:

- ⦿ the use of sanctions which had been rising under the Coalition Government has been declining since 2013 – this is true of West Lothian as it is in the other parts of the UK
- ⦿ the increase in foodbank usage has continued to increase, albeit that rate has declined
- ⦿ the most recent annual foodbank statistics for West Lothian show that the 2,011 adults and 2,534 benefitted from support in the last 12 month
- ⦿ in 2015 West Lothian Council awarded a Crisis Grant or Community Care Grant to 5.8% of the population – lower than the Scottish average of 7.16%
- ⦿ West Lothian residents applying for the grant have a 59% chance of success – this is lower than the Scottish average of 68%
- ⦿ research by Sheffield Hallam University and the Institute for Fiscal Studies suggests that West Lothian Council is more vulnerable to the effects of welfare reform than other local authority areas
- ⦿ poverty and deprivation is felt particularly sharply in some of West Lothians smaller more rural communities such as Fauldhouse, Breich Valley and Blackburn
- ⦿ changes to the credit market mean that particular households in West Lothian will be at risk of food poverty and food insecurity including;
 - 5,450 lone parent households
 - the 31% of the population in socio-economic categories 7,8 and 9
 - the third of households with a population under £20,000 reporting ‘they do not manage well financially’
 - the 42% of West Lothian’s population that has low or no savings.
- ⦿ food poverty and food insecurity in West Lothian is likely to amount to between **4,545 based on the foodbank statistics up to around 10,700 people** based on national research

5.6 We were assisted by five organisations to recruit participants to the client survey. A total of 44 people were interviewed and findings included:

- ⦿ almost half of those interviewed never use a shopping list while half that number occasionally do so
- ⦿ in instances where clients receive budgeting support this is valued
- ⦿ people's capacity to purchase the quality of food they would like is constrained by health and mobility issues and lack of accessible shopping options, as well as issues of income and financial management
- ⦿ 70% of those interviewed have worried about having enough food in the last year while 60% have worried about the quality of food they eat
- ⦿ these concerns are borne out in practice with 60% having occasional or frequent incidences where they did not have enough food and 60% cutting back on quality to get by, mostly on a frequent basis
- ⦿ the majority of those (14 of the 26) experiencing food poverty or food insecurity had not attended a food bank
- ⦿ the reasons people struggle are varied but include benefit delays, the challenge of getting by on a low income or insecure employment situations, relationship breakdowns and major life transitions (e.g. illness) as well as unanticipated expenses (e.g. mobile bills)
- ⦿ dealing with the risk of food poverty and food insecurity is an ongoing challenge for many of the clients rather than a one-off experience
- ⦿ all of those experiencing food poverty or food insecurity had given up something else important in their lives to get by
- ⦿ the health effects of food poverty and food insecurity include:
 - people skipping meals
 - not having enough food to eat and going a whole day without food
 - poorer physical health and weight loss
 - poorer mental health (greater reliance on prescription drugs).
- ⦿ clients of all ages and genders sometimes lack good food making skills and those younger clients who have attended training often value it.

Recommendations

5.7 The report identifies a number of issues which WLC, the Food Poverty Group and others should consider to improve circumstances for clients:

- ⦿ WLC may want to consider the reasons behind the lower than average award rate for the SWF, even if there may be good reasons behind this – it would send a positive message to partner organisations
- ⦿ the interviews identified the value placed upon budgeting and cooking skills when delivered at the right time and the Food Poverty Group may want to map provision and assess the potential to target delivery
- ⦿ the interviews identified the contributory factors behind food poverty and insecurity including life transitions (e.g. relationship breakdown, illness etc) and the Food Poverty Group may want to map the agencies involved and whether information could be targeted to them
- ⦿ there are many good organisations working with clients but awareness of what other organisations do and how they might work together are sometimes lacking – the Food Poverty Group should consider how to increase networking around food poverty, cooking, food production etc
- ⦿ we recommend the Food Poverty Groups consider inter-agency training for staff and volunteers to spot people experiencing food poverty/insecurity and support or refer effectively
- ⦿ the potential misuse of Healthy Start Vouchers should be raised with partner agencies
- ⦿ we recommend the Food Poverty Group explore the community food hub concept and assess the potential of a network of community food hubs with links to other networks e.g. growers, community cafes etc
- ⦿ we recommend the inclusion of a focus on food poverty and food insecurity within the West Lothian Anti-Poverty Strategy to raise the profile of the issue and the need for action around it.

Appendix 'A'

Statistical Analysis

Foodbanks, sanctions and poverty premium

The use of foodbanks is indeed complex and overlapping, but to deny any connection between foodbank usage and benefit sanctioning appears problematic. The UK's leading foodbank provider (The Trussell Trust) identify “benefit delays” “low income” and “benefit changes” as two in every three reasons for people attending their foodbanks.

Foodbank usage and benefit sanctions have both received significant publicity over recent years, often seen as interlinked. Both grew dramatically, not quite in symmetry during the period of the coalition government from 2010. The dramatic increase in benefit sanctions (and other benefit measures that reduced or restricted income for lowest income quintile households) was followed, within a short timeframe, by an increase in foodbank usage.

The subsequent decline in sanctions since 2013 has symbiotically (or coincidentally) operated in parallel to a plateauing in foodbank usage.

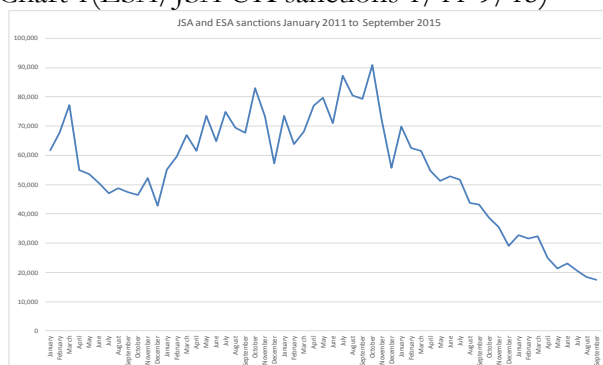
The two charts below (numbered 1 and 2) are over the same timescale; (January 2011 to September 2015) showing on the left the ESA and JSA sanctions regime¹ (Chart 1) and on the right the weekly foodbank usage² (Chart 2).

Chart 3 shows the dramatic increase in benefit sanctions, a practice supported by the majority of UK citizens as revealed in the hardening attitudes to welfare and benefits noted annually in British Social Attitude Surveys released during the coalition government period.

Chart 3 identifies that sanctioning has been prevalent since the Blair Government of 1997 onwards, increasingly more punitive under the premiership of Gordon Brown, as he responded to public disquiet around benefit levels. It clearly shows the increase in the early years of the coalition government rising to a peak of around 75,000 per month (mean average) in 2013.

The adverse publicity around sanctions along with campaigning around much of the unfairness and arbitrariness of certain decisions appears to have had a change of heart within the DWP with averages reducing substantially in 2014 (to 49,500/month) and in 2015 the average was 23,000 per month numbers seen under the Blair government in early 2000s.

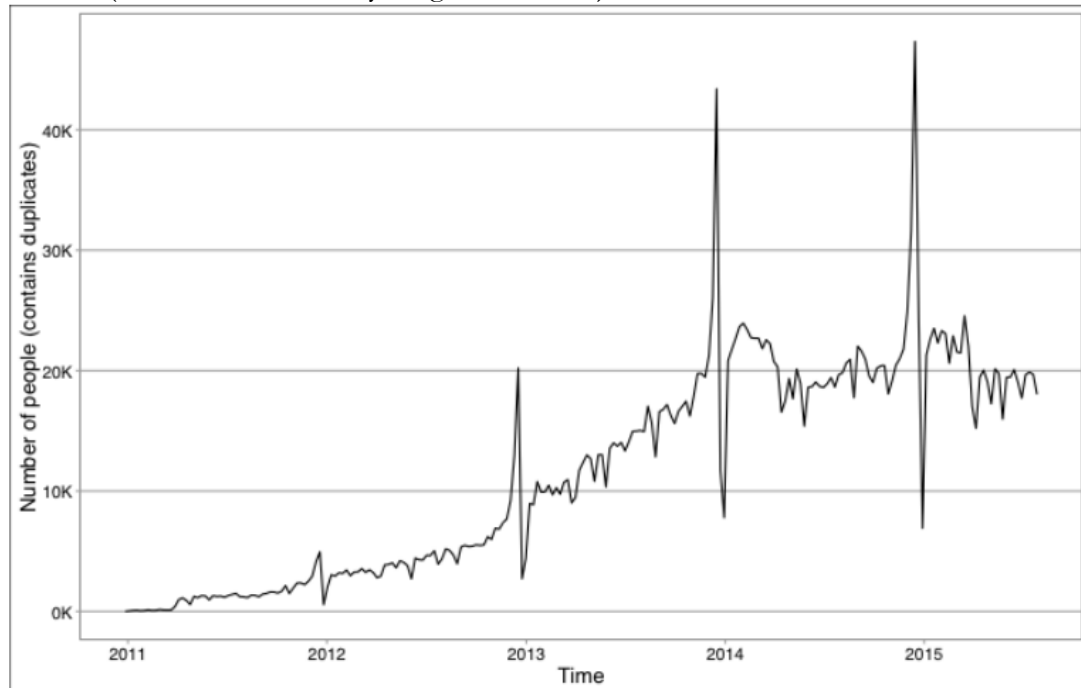
Chart 1(ESA/JSA UK sanctions 1/11-9/15)



¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/jobseekers-allowance-and-employment-and-support-allowance-sanctions-decisions-made-to-december-2015>

² <http://www.nemode.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Nemode-FB-project-phase-2-technical-design-V10-FINAL-2.pdf>

Chart 2 (UK foodbank weekly usage 1/11-9/15)



The total number of sanctions applied over the duration of the Coalition government was 3.6m. The reduction in sanctions to levels last seen in the year 2000 (Chart 3) is mirrored across West Lothian over recent years (Chart 4).

The reduction in sanctions in the past two years has not resulted in declining use of foodbanks (Chart 5) although there has been a significant slowdown in their usage suggesting, perhaps, that a plateau has been reached around 1,000,000 vouchers issued (representing c500,000 households).

The highest year for sanctions was 2013 (average 75,000 per month) followed by 2012 (average 67,500 per month). It is not possible to extrapolate whether the two - declining sanctions to levels seen in 2000 and a slowing down of foodbank usage - are linked.

Chart 3(ESA/JSA sanctions UK 2000-2015)

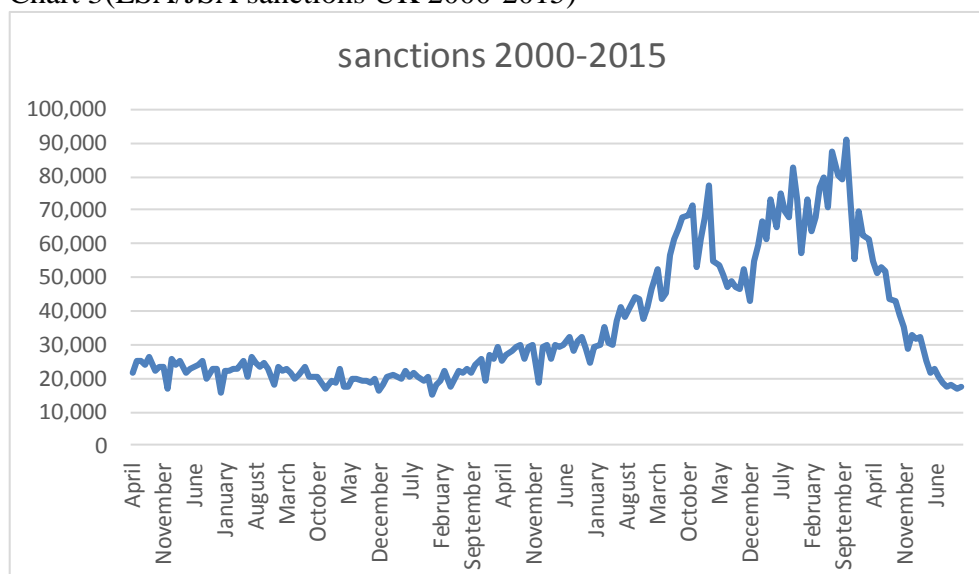


Chart 4 (Declining sanction across WLC)

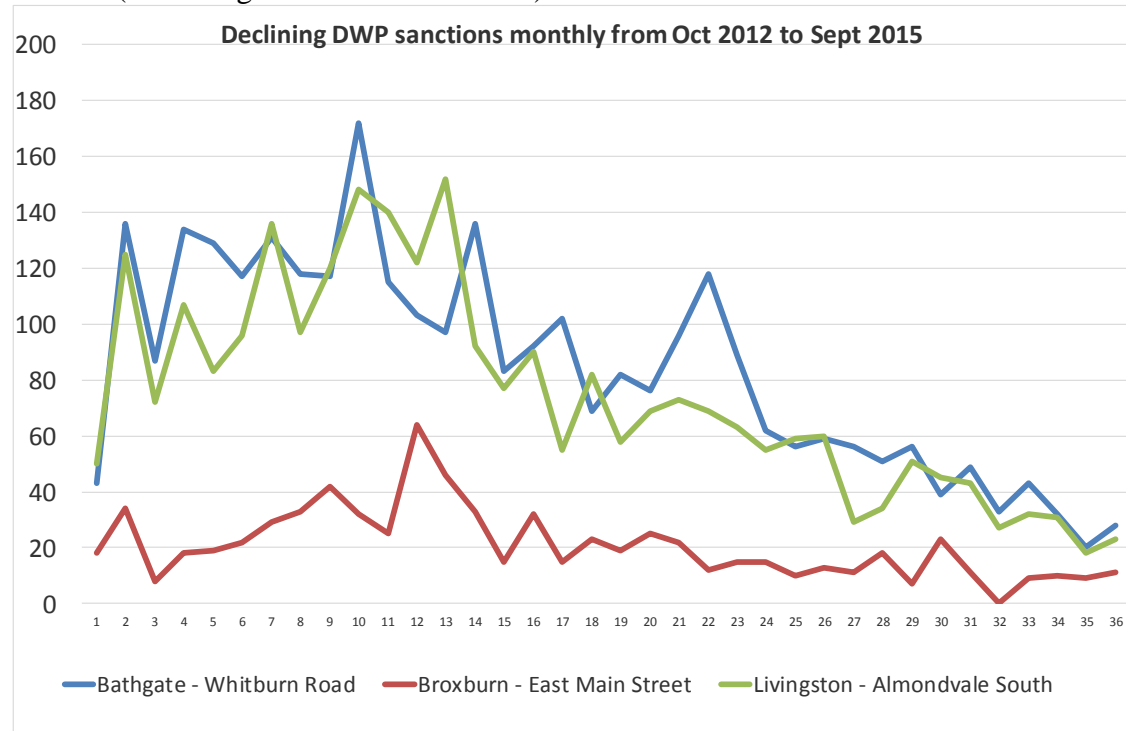
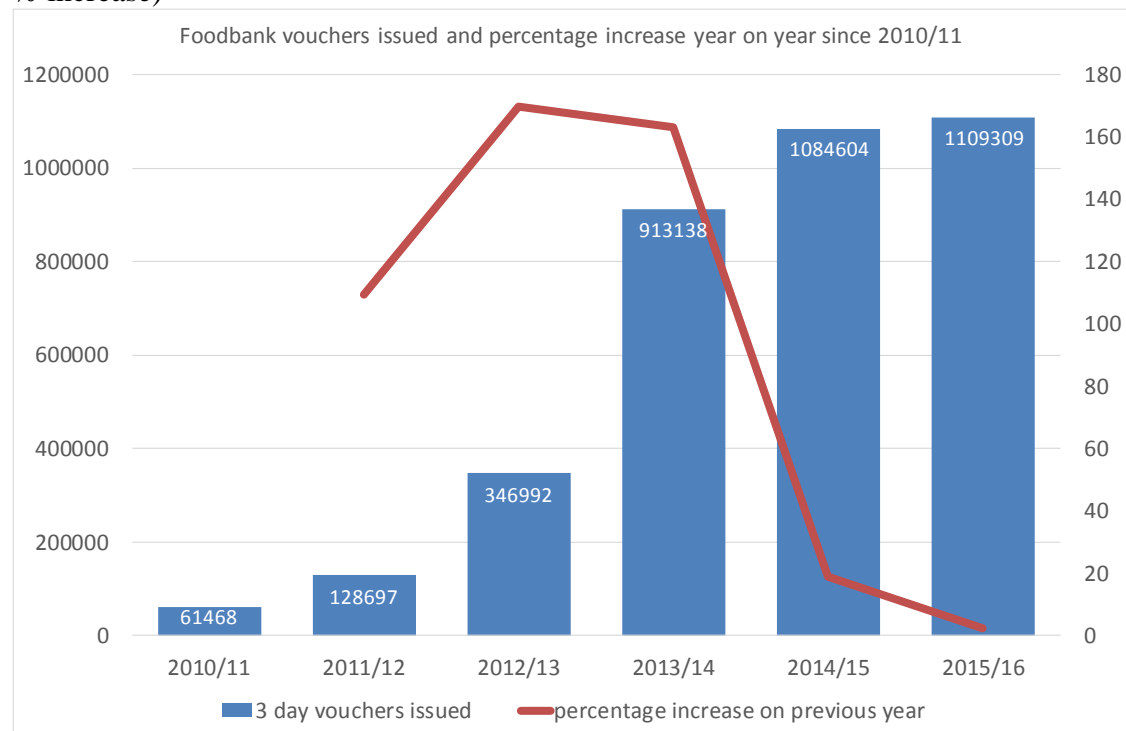


Chart 5 (Trussell Trust UK foodbank vouchers issued from 2010/11 and year on year % increase)



Why are people using foodbanks

Most observers accept the multiplicity of reason for foodbank usage and the dramatic increases in their number since the election of the coalition government May 2010 includes austerity and benefit sanctioning amongst other aspects including:

- national and local government policy – particularly, but not exclusively, in relation to benefits;
- cost of living – principally, but not exclusively, food, fuel and housing;
- prevalence and capacity of referral agencies (access to food banks is by referral only and cuts and closures of referral services will affect food bank usage);
- availability of opportunities for low-skills employment;
- prevalence and maturity of Trussell Trust food banks;
- availability of alternative emergency food provision (e.g., from food banks not affiliated with the Trust, some of which may operate on a ‘self-referral’ basis);
- cultural and social acceptability of using food banks

In April 2016, The Trussell Trust identified the reasons given for foodbank attendance, these are shown below (Chart 6) with the primary reasons of benefit delay and changes, and low income. These reasons are then compared in the past year to reasons given in West Lothian Foodbanks (Chart 7).

West Lothian shows a slightly higher percentage of benefit related issues, homelessness and domestic violence than the national averages.

Chart 6 (Trussell Trust reasons for presenting at foodbank time series last three years)

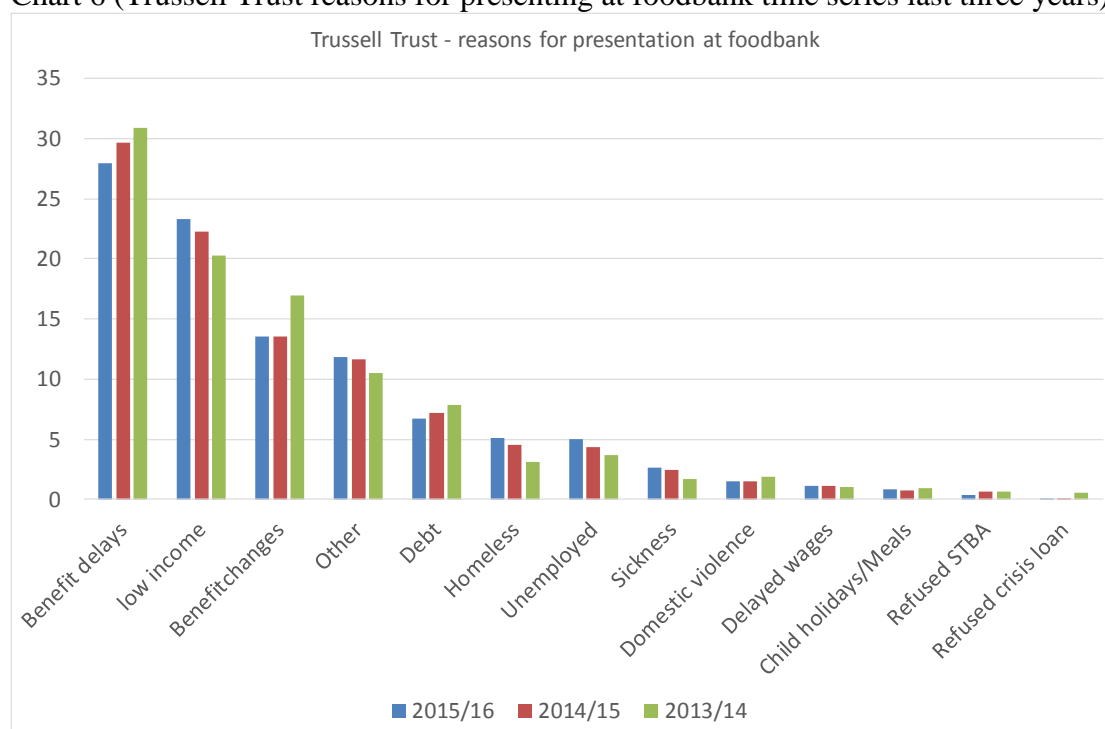
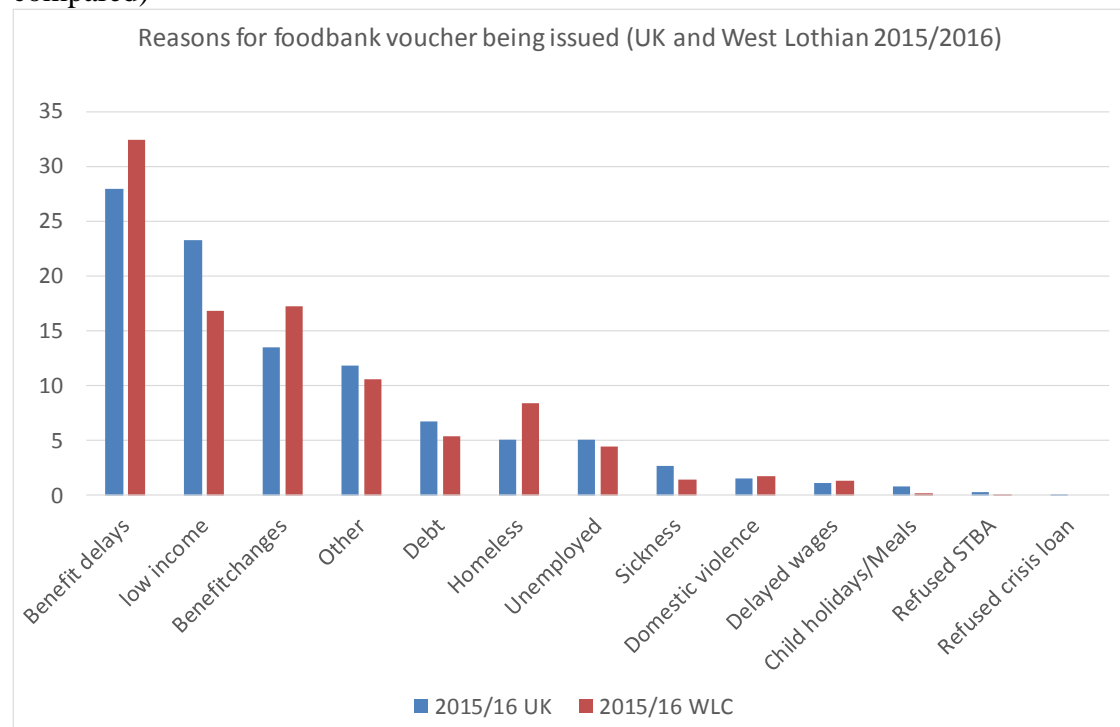


Chart 7 (Trussell Trust reasons for presenting at foodbank UK and West Lothian compared)



In 2015/16 a total of 1,109,309 three-day emergency food supplies were provided to people in crisis by the Trussell Trust, compared to 1,084,604 in 2014/15. An increase of 24,705 representing a rise of 2.25%. (see Chart 8).

Within these numbers, 415,866 supplies were for children. (This is a measure of volume not unique users, and on average, people needed two foodbank referrals). In Scotland in 2016 The Trussell Trust issued 133,726 three-day food supplies (see Chart 9) representing around 12% of all food supplies issued in the year; higher than Scotland's proportion of circa 8.25% of the UK population.

If the food supplies mirrored population proportionately Scotland has around 42,500 more three day packs issued than proportionality might have anticipated.

Chart 8 (Trussell Trust adults and children beneficiaries of foodbank voucher (2012-2015/16)

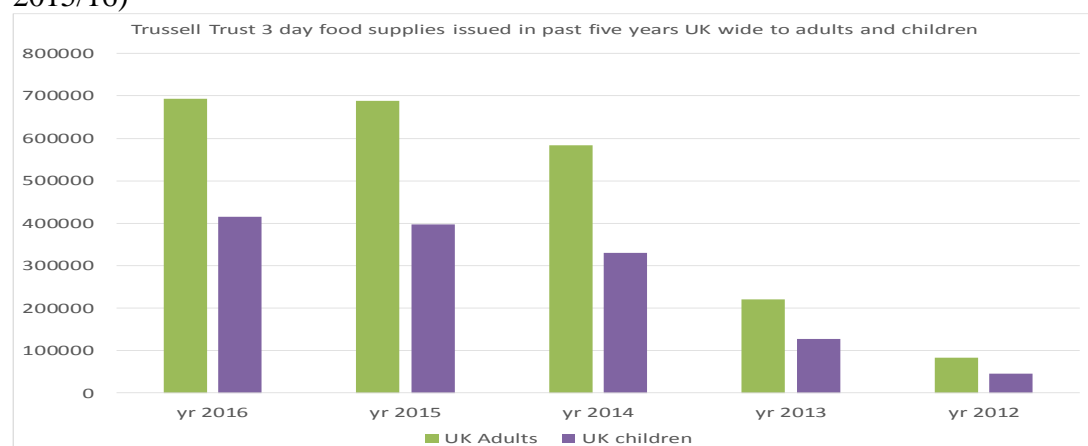
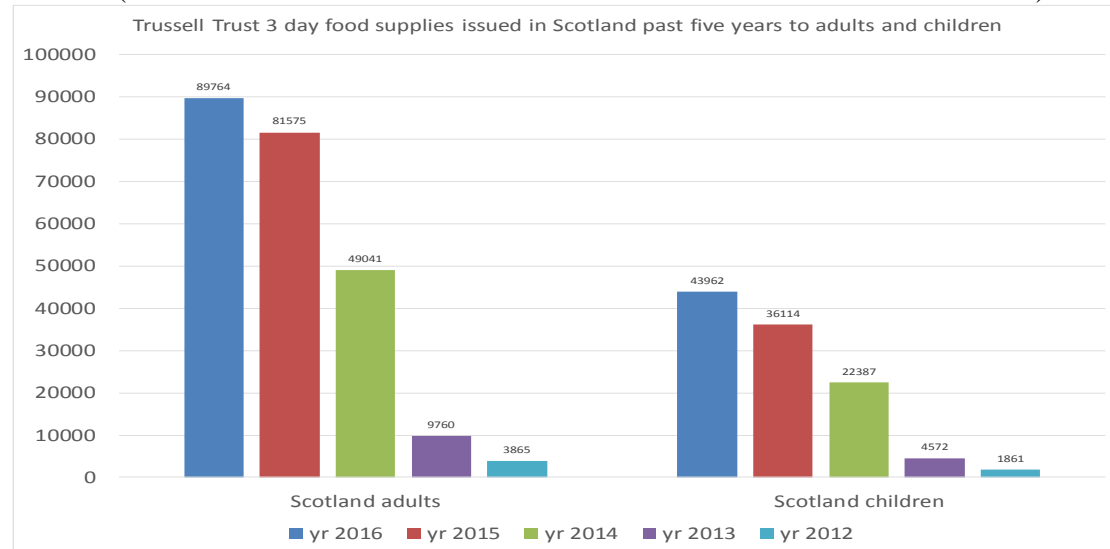


Chart 9 (Trussell Trust adults and children beneficiaries Scotland 2012-2015/16)



As stated in chart 5 The Trussell Trust is the UK's largest distributor of foodbank supplies with 424 foodbanks in their network. Their figures published figures to show that foodbank use accelerated rapidly between 2011 and 2013 when it almost reached 1,000,000 and grew more slowly from 2013 to its current 1,100,000 vouchers today. These remain alarming figures which The Trussell Trust and other commentators have no doubt is largely as a result of government policy decisions.

- 92% of foodbanks reported low pay as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 69% it is a major issue
- 93% of foodbanks reported admin delays in benefit payments as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 81% it is a major issue
- 89% of foodbanks reported benefit sanctions as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 60% it is a major issue
- 67% of foodbanks reported mental health issues as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 36% it is a major issue
- 67% of foodbanks reported problems accessing ESA as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 41% it is a major issue
- 51% of foodbanks reported problems accessing PIP as an issue driving foodbank use;
 - for 16% it is a major issue
- 75% of foodbanks reported wages too low as a significant problem
- 56% of foodbanks reported zero hours contracts as a significant problem
- 47% of foodbanks reported high living costs as a significant problem
- 44% of foodbanks reported problems accessing working benefits as a significant problem
- 23% of foodbanks reported delayed wages as a significant problem
- 20% of foodbanks reported universal credit allowances/entitlements as a significant problem
- 19% of foodbanks reported static wages as a significant problem

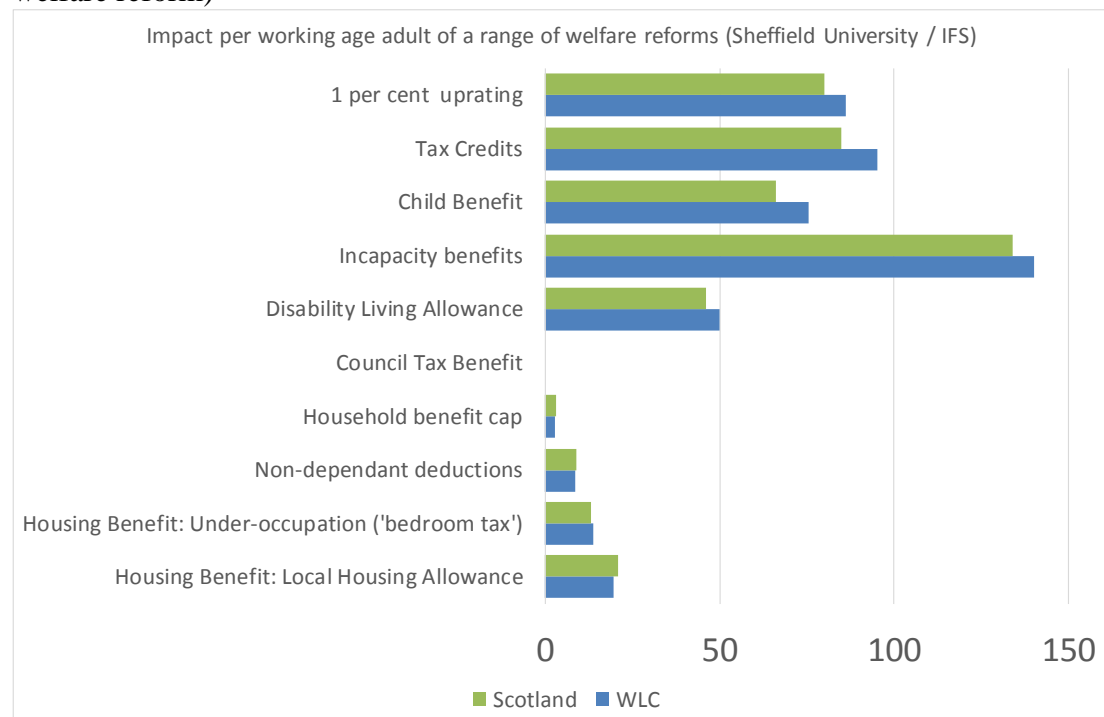
Research undertaken by Sheffield Hallam University and the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) revealed the extent of individual welfare reform measures across Scotland's local

authorities. The reforms that had the biggest financial impact were not the headline-grabbing ones of the housing benefit cap and the bedroom tax, these were relatively small in relation to the top five impacts of:

- Incapacity benefit changes,
- the 1% uprating of benefits and
- tax credit changes
- child benefit changes and
- Disability living allowance alterations

In the top five impact areas West Lothian was higher than the Scottish average. See Chart 10

Chart 10 (Sheffield Hallam / IFS research loss (£/year) per working age adult of welfare reform)



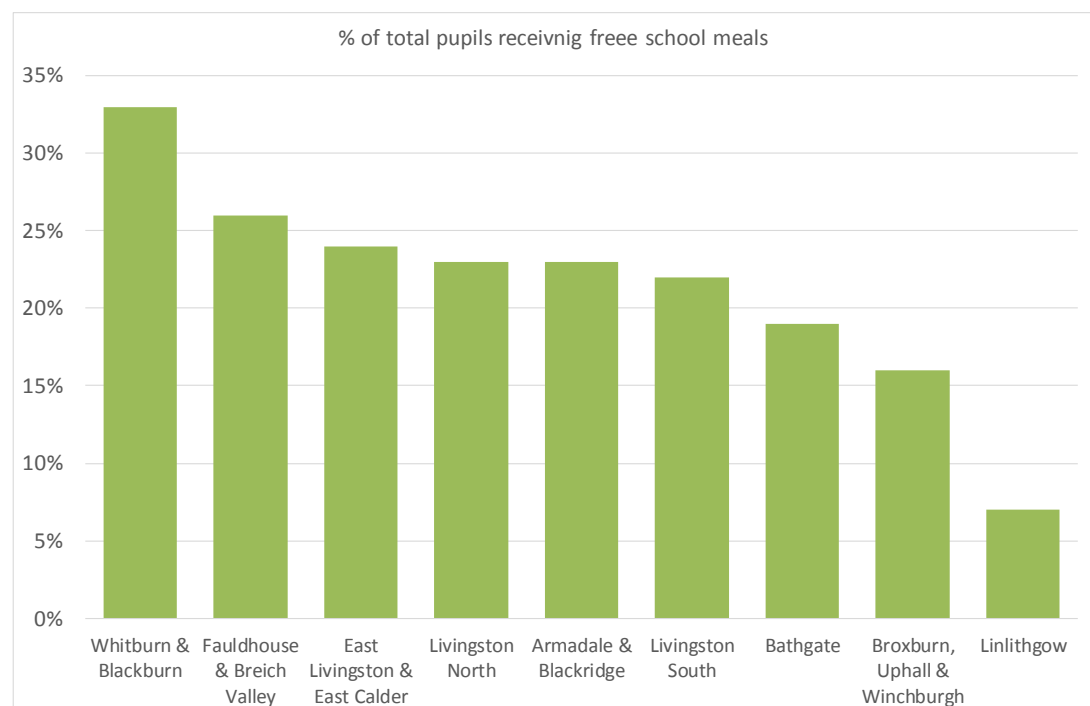
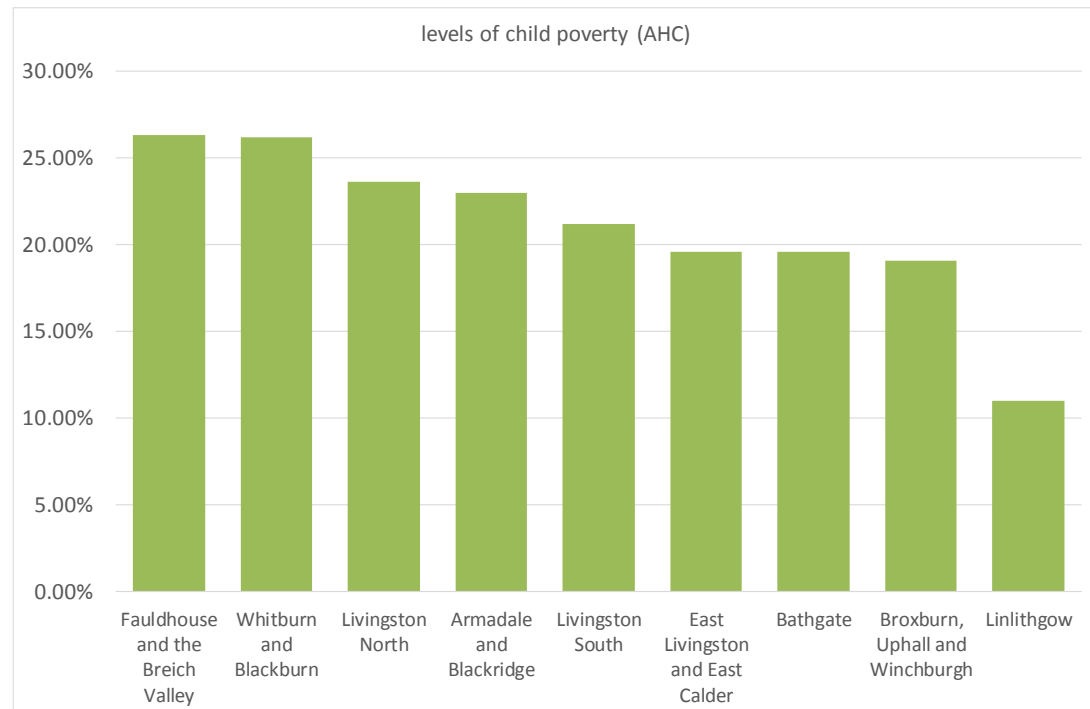
West Lothian Council has identified the distribution of foodbank vouchers by ward level with Whitburn and Blackburn the area with the greatest propensity for foodbank voucher usage with the distribution by postcode shown in charts 11 and 12

Chart 11 (Vouchers and beneficiaries. 2015) **Chart 12 (Vouchers issued Whitburn / Blackburn)**



Whitburn and Blackburn is considerably higher in foodbank usage; it is also the second highest ward for child poverty across West Lothian (After housing costs) and the highest for free school meals.

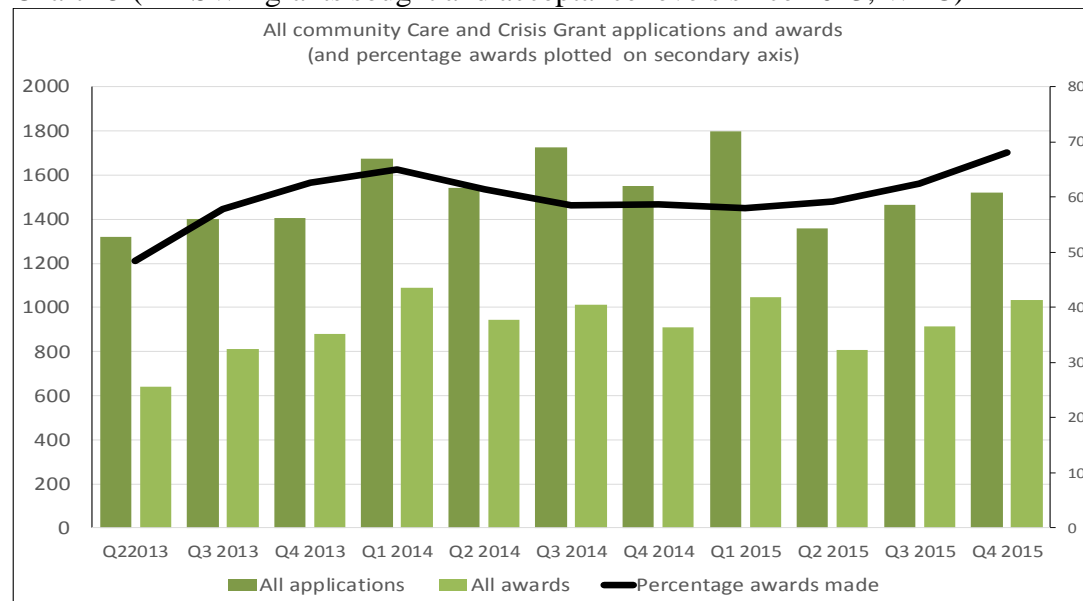
Chart 13 identifies the areas with the greatest propensity of child poverty across West Lothian, and chart 14 shows the percentage of children in receipt of free school meals. Chart 13 (Child poverty by ward WLC, AHC) Chart 14 (Free school meals issued by ward WLC)



Part of the Scottish Government's mitigation strategy against sanctions and other punitive austerity measures affecting welfare reform has been the introduction of the Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) offering a mix of Crisis and Community Care Grants. West Lothian Councils awards in these categories over recent years are shown in chart 15.

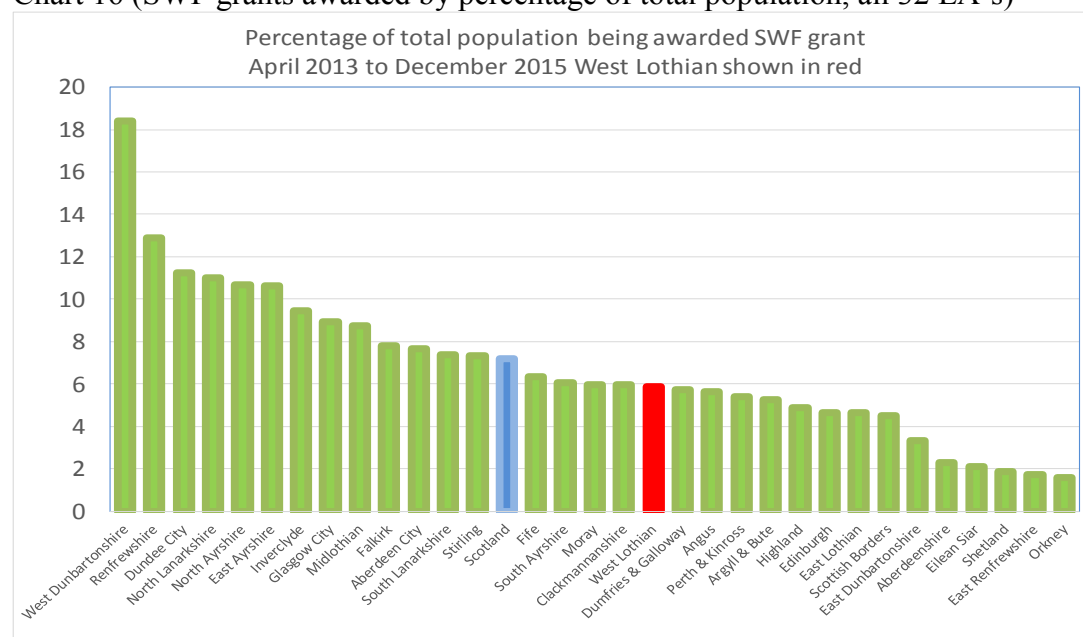
They reveal that over 10,000 awards were made from 16,760 applications over the period from April 2013, with a total of 3,375 community care grants and 6,710 Crisis grants awarded:

Chart 15 (All SWF grants sought and acceptance levels since 2013, WLC)



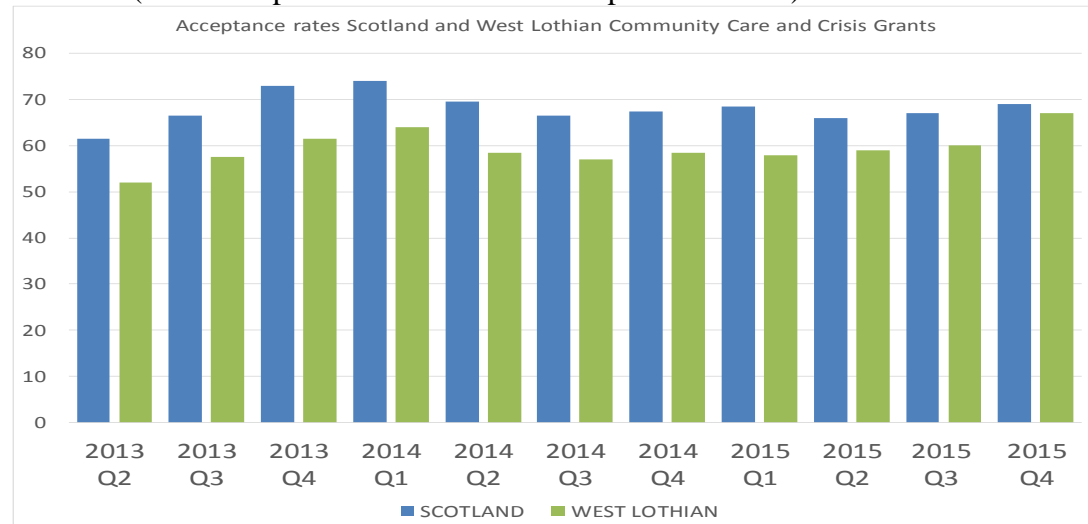
In comparison to the rest of Scotland WLC has awarded either a Crisis Grant or Community Care Grant to 5.8% of the West Lothian Council population. Lower than the mean average of Scotland's local authorities 7.16%, as shown in Chart 16:

Chart 16 (SWF grants awarded by percentage of total population, all 32 LA's)



West Lothian Council residents that apply for either a Crisis or Community Care Grant have an average 59% chance of success in receiving the grant; lower than the Scottish average of 68%. In every quarter since Q2 2013, West Lothian awarded fewer grants than the Scottish average.

Chart 17 (SWF acceptance rates Scotland compared to WLC)



During our research everyone we interviewed earned (self-assessed) less than the median average weekly income (before and after housing costs), indeed the overwhelming majority of people seen earned less than 60% of median income £284 (BHC) and £243 (AHC) which would place them in the official definition of households living with below average incomes in poverty.

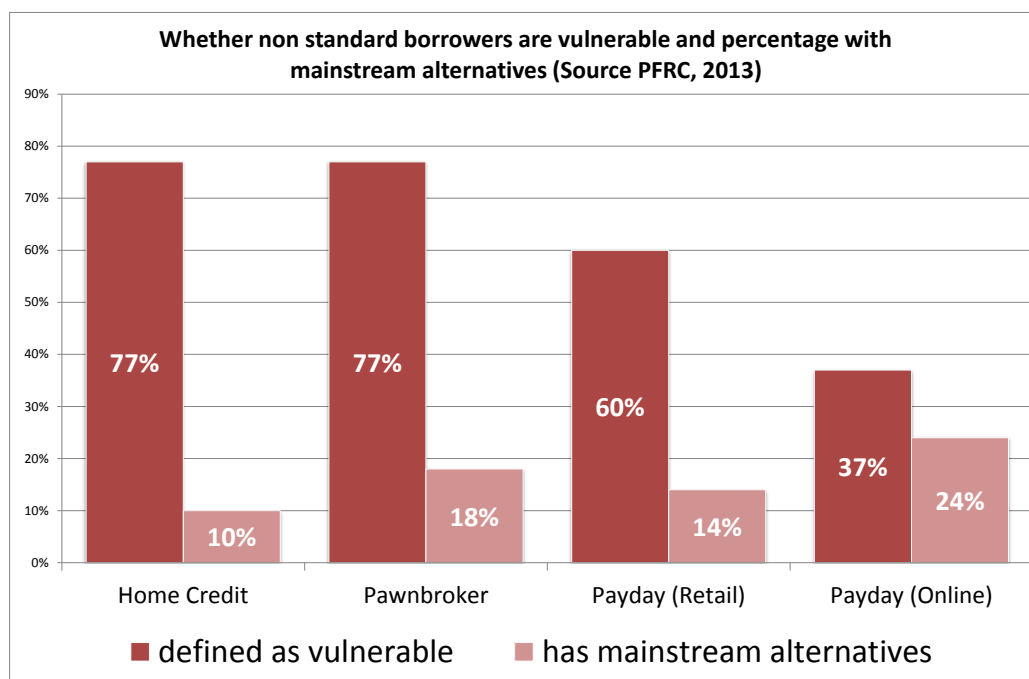
Credit, poverty and foodbanks

Debates on the subject of credit are emotive. Some people express a view that those on the lowest incomes ought not to borrow at all, that this merely exacerbates their financial challenges, any interest rate, let alone the poverty premium that is often paid to high cost credit issuers will be detrimental for their budget.

Others argue that juggling financial situations is a harsh reality and that people will often seek small sums of money to smooth out peaks and troughs in their budget. These arguments on credit will not be rehearsed here, however, regardless of differing opinions on the subject, it is clear that many poorer households do borrow money on a regular basis and that this borrowing is often, and increasingly, driven by need.

Moreover, it is also true that there is – again regardless of opinion – a seismic change in the provision of commercial credit to the people within the poorest households, those who lenders ascribe the ugly term, subprime borrowers.

The respected PFRC identified in 2013 the different characteristics and vulnerabilities of commercial credit borrowers from home credit, pawnbroking, retail and online payday. Since they produced these figures the most vulnerable in each category will have diminished, the industry has moved on the credit spectrum from subprime to near prime borrowers, leaving the lowest income households with ever more limited choices.



Four years ago, in a report for WLFIN we reported that Provident Financial Group, the largest home credit lender in the UK with 1.8m customer nationally, allowed us to extrapolate to an estimated 8500 customers in West Lothian. We reported that home credit rather than payday was the domain of the most vulnerable borrower. At that time we reported around 5,000 payday borrowers each borrowing an average of £260 six times a year.

In the four years since the WLFIN report PFG has slashed its customer numbers from 1.8m (2012) to 1.5m (2013) to 1.1m (2014) to 0.9m (2015) customer UK wide. The loss of 900,000 customers is spread UK wide but it is not spread across their loan book. The customer increasingly being declined by PFG is the customer seeking the greatest flexibility of missed payments in their repayment schedule – the poorest and most vulnerable customer.

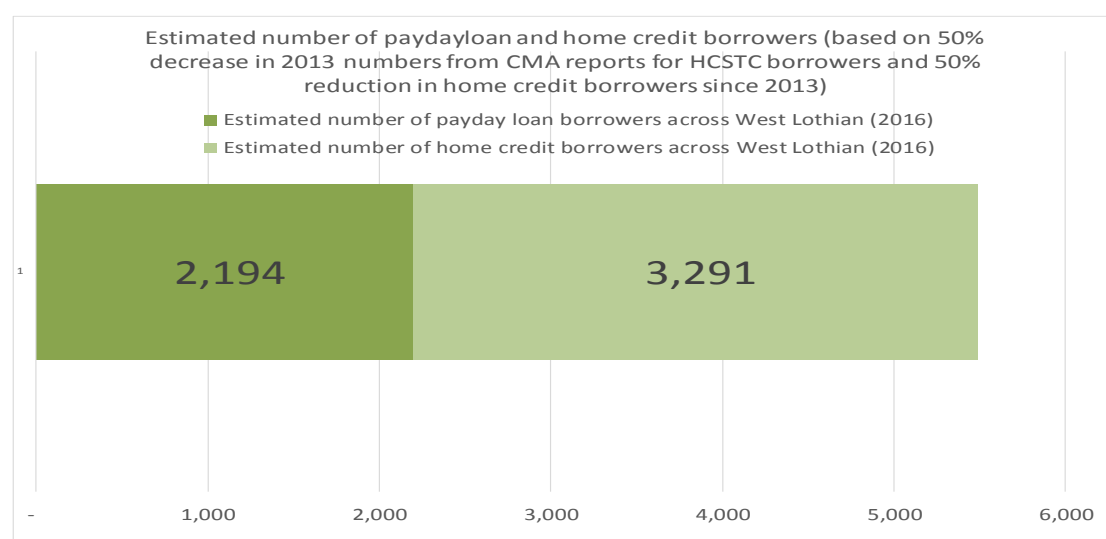
Payday, both online and retail has similarly slashed customer numbers as a result of government legislation (the payday cap) and increased (and welcome) scrutiny around affordability. That the poorest households were ever using payday to the extent that some believed is debatable, but there is little doubt that those on the poorest incomes are not accessing it now.

The loss of credit from these commercial and legal providers may indeed be a good thing, customers will not pay egregious APR rates and, so the argument goes, will be better off in the long run. However, their needs are not being met by lower cost providers. A key aspect of small sum, sometimes flexible credit provision is being removed from West Lothian households.

The granulation of customer means that those without employment, or with thin files often as a result of their tenure status (social housing tenants are twice as likely to be

refused mainstream credit)³ will find it increasingly problematic, without savings or reliance on friends or family to access the small sums they will, inevitably, occasionally need. Within WLC the datasets continue to suggest levels of vulnerability which may have a consequential impact on people with no access to credit and therefore a greater need than ever before to access foodbanks and other social welfare emergency services:

- 42% households (30,620) are headed by person aged 16-44;
- including 5,450 lone parent households;
- 51% of West Lothian under 39 years old; (Scotland: 48%)
- 31% of working population are within socio-economic categories 7,8, & 9, jobs; (Scotland: 28%)
- 1/3 households with income under £20,000 report (to Scottish Household Survey) that they “*do not manage well financially*”;
- Only three local authorities have a lower saving percentage than West Lothian’s 42%⁴



These home credit and HCSTC borrowers will still however be borrowing circa £2,500,000 and paying interest of circa £3,500,000 in interest payments. Beyond these figures there will be catalogue and rent-to-own borrowers often low income, benefit dependant and vulnerable households. The lack of access to credit presents a significant challenge for West Lothian policy makers who are currently seeking affordable credit alternatives.

³ Sarah Forster & George Wilkinson *Assessing the Impact of Social Housing Rent Payment Data on Credit Scoring and Financial Exclusion* Big Issue Invest May 2010

⁴ SHS “whether respondent has savings” 2010 only N Lanarkshire (38%) Dundee (40%) and Glasgow (37%) had a lower percentage

Appendix 'B'

Client Quotes

Attitude to food

When I get the £300 I get my food shop, a full-on shop, when I was wee there was nothing. I want my kids to have varieties; having stuff in the cupboards is very important to me; cupboards full is important; it's a big thing for me

Female, 21-24 single parent

I like to keep my cupboards stacked up, it happened before (partner lost income) and we had to borrow £200 cos we struggled, borrowed from my mum

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

It's important to me to have food in the house, in the cupboards, I've never had empty cupboards

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I feel a lot better when I know there is food so the wee man can have enough to eat

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

if I've not got food id starve myself to get food for the kids

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I stress about food; I'm paying too much to Provident £15/week trying to stop it all

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"I remember what it was like when I was younger, (little food) don't want that for my kids"

Female, 21-24m single parent

I try not to compromise on quality, I don't buy grey meat, but I don't buy enough fruit because it isn't cheap

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I used to just go to ASDA, didn't really think about it, now it's shop to shop, Lidl, really good, buy my links sausage from Lidl when I used to go to butcher.

Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

the thought of not having stuff in the cupboard would be alarming

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"Nothing in the cupboards is depressing, I'm not keeping myself healthy, If I don't look after myself I need to (manufacture a way) to get to my Mums"

Female, 25-29, with dependant

I get depressed about not having enough food; today, I had soup at lunchtime – that'll do me, I'd rather eat healthy food but I don't know what that is

Female, 55-59 single

I pretend to my sister that I've eaten, and I don't want to worry my son. I tell him I'm fine. He looks in my cupboard and he shouts at me and says "you should have told me" he then leaves me food, not money, he says "I'm not leaving you money for fags"

Female, 55-59 single

I go through phases of eating properly, and then I get down and, I don't know, lazy I guess

Female 25-29 single

Lists

I like to be organised, I go for the cheapest things

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I'll buy more if I don't make a list

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

easier if you make a list cos then you know what you are shopping for

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

Always make a list, if I don't then I'll spend more

Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

Yes, It's cheaper when you make a list, I'm careful I'm choosy in what I put in basket.

Kids still like their brands like Weetabix but I get the cheap stuff for pasta and beans.

I'm finding it really tough since I lost my job (and income halved)

Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I know where to go to get things cheaper, my kids go daft when they see things are reduced but in my day it was sight and smell and it still is for me

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I like everything to be done on a Friday, weekly, never make a list...shopping is my first priority, shopping, shelter, heat

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I should make a list 'cos it helps; plan my meals, not buy random stuff. I'd find a budgeting class useful If I could come

Female 25-29 single

It will probably help – I always come back with double

Female 30-34 single with dependents

Habits / money management

if there's something there (discounted) and I can do something with it, I'll do it
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I used to just go to ASDA, didn't really think about it, now it's shop to shop, Lidl, really good, buy my links sausage from Lidl when I used to go to butcher.
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

usually get £10, 3 item packs of mince and make a series of dishes, I make them in bulk and freeze them. It's important to me to have food in the house, in the cupboards, I've never had empty cupboards
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

pot of homemade soup lasts two days, there's always a way to make food
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I buy fresh meat, cupboard stuff, your pastas and rice...cupboards usually have food but sometimes they're empty
Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

b&m is good and cheap, ASDA fresh stuff is good, I use £30 home delivery from Iceland cos it's easier and I can then go onto other shops
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I always look at the price of stuff; Tesco deals are in your face" "most days I use fresh stuff"
Female, 21-24m single parent

Every month when his wages come in I pay rent, gas and electric, telephone, TV licence, council tax and then food shop. I've set aside some money for our (caravan) holiday - I joined the credit union - to Berwick upon Tweed
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I am not with Provident; my mum and dad were with them, too expensive. I'm not with Brighthouse my aunt and uncle were with Brighthouse, too expensive
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I go to supermarket at 2.30 when they start reducing stuff, go to late and there are bargains but most of it is gone.
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

when the stuff is reduced we look at it. I tend to make a lot of macaroni and box it and freeze it
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I borrowed £200 off Provident, they're ok, but not Brighthouse I wouldn't be paying three times as much for my telly

Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

my mum's got that Pay as you View she's got everything with them, 2 tellies, fridge freezer, washing machine you name it - she comes up about £40 short all the time - I wouldn't be doing that

Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

I know where to go to get things cheaper, my kids go daft when they see things are reduced but in my day it was sight and smell and it still is for me

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

"I need help budgeting my money but I lack confidence in myself – I need to get confidence, to learn stuff, like cooking, the healthy stuff, you know"

Female, 25-29, with dependant

I buy cheapest I can see to get mair for my money, cheap tins out of Aldi are better but \i buy the cheapest to make it (money) stretch

Female, 50-54, couple with dependants

Situation / catalyst

I stopped working because of my health, and to care for my husband. I didn't know how or what to claim, assumed we couldn't. It was a terrible situation, we only had the bare necessities

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

it was terrible, maybe I had a wee bit depression too, everyone normally comes to me, but it was such a worry, went 6 months with nothing coming in, got loan of £15 to get a (copy) doctors line cos DWP lost line, I had empty shelves, completely bare cupboards, my man's got emphysema. I'd go to my Ma's see what I could make there

Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I worry when it comes to money, I was so worried, stress, crying, worry, never thought about it before but then, stroke, lost my job, suddenly, you're there...

Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I took out a DWP loan (£800) they took first payment before I thought they would, left me with nothing.

Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

I got accused of not feeding my son properly by (extended) family member, I was raging. I took a picture of my cupboards after shopping to show what I had in the house. I get anxious, I think I'm letting him down, people think I'm letting him down
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I found it really hard when I finished at the Council, no one told me anything< I found it really hard, didn't know I could claim, if it wasn't for (Ann Kerr) WESLO I don't know what I would have done
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I didn't realise we should be getting benefit, there's not enough Anne's (Kerr, WESLO) going about. She was fabulous.
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I was hospitalised during this time (Dec-Mar awaiting benefit reimbursement) it affected my health, pneumonia, I was rundown, stressed, worried that my house would be taken away. Awful. I was devastated. Became more and more anxious. I don't know how to work the system; I don't know how the system works. I plucked up courage to come in here (WESLO) it was such a relief.
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I get dizziness and light headed if all I have is a piece and jam
Female, 50-54, couple with dependants

I get headaches without food, dizziness, I feel drained, it affects my work
Female 25-29 single

Fridge will have milk in it, and a pack of bacon, cupboards will have cereal and some soup tins
Female 25-29 single

Displacement

We've not gone without food but they (kids) go without treats, if you can't go to the zoo then you can't go, I tend to take them to places that don't cost
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

wherever I go, when the kids were wee and now the grandkids a picnic goes with us. I'm organised, and if you budget right...
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I will go without, or just have a piece of toast
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

"I'd rather not have "Sky" for a time than not have food"
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

"I don't smoke I don't drink, if I planned a night out and was running out of money for food then I'd sack my pals for my children (to eat)"
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

We've not gone without food but they (kids) go without treats, if you can't go to the zoo then you can't go, I tend to take them to places that don't cost
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

my partner cannot afford driving lessons I can't afford the (forthcoming) Blair Drummond trip - I put money away if I can but it's not easy
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

kids are not going to get unhealthy by not going to the zoo, but they will by not eating
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I didn't pay my phone bill so I could buy food, cost affects everything I do
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

there are times when I will have a piece of toast so he can have enough
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

once or twice we don't have enough money for food but family help, they lend me the money...
we tend to make sure we've got enough for food; we prioritise food quite high
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I was getting sair heids from drinking coffee all the time and not eating,
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I had no petrol and my daughter fell and did her ligaments, we had to wait for my sister in law to get home to then take her up to St Johns (hospital)
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

At home now, I'm like "will you turn that x box off, have you seen what it's doing to the electric"
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

we're getting by, not able to jump in car or go out for lunch with my daughter when I want to because I don't want my daughter to pay for me
Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I would give up food for me not for my kids; I had to buy half shop in order to get my daughter to hospital in Kilmarnock had to stay over 3 nights. Me and my partner stayed for three nights, we had to sleep and eat so I skipped meals there
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

When I moved home (from 2 to 1 bedroom) I paid someone to move me; so I had no money for food, I ran out...if I have a wee tin of beans in the cupboard I'll eat that
Female 55-59, single

Car tax came in; I double up, or I dip in (to savings) to keep my head above water
Female 50-54 couple with dependants

Sometimes I worry that I don't have enough to feed the kids; if I've not got enough for myself I make sure that my weans are fed
Female 40-44 single with dependants

Cooking / food quality

"I can cook, I understand quality and price, I don't buy meat just because it's cheap!"
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

"10/10 I stir fry a lot with chicken, I use mince a lot, lasagne's, that kind of stuff"
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

when I shop I don't look at types of chicken, chicken is chicken so I go for the cheapest.
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

I'm quite good curries, use a slow cooker, started doing that recently, made a difference
Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

I'd give myself six out of ten, I make a decent chicken curry, make my own sauce, shepherd's pie, big trays, spaghetti Bolognese, same, freeze whatever's left.
Female, 40-44, couple with dependents

I only know how to take stuff out of the freezer and put it in a chip pan
Female, 25-29, with dependant

I buy from the butchers, I wouldn't buy processed meat – supermarkets aren't better than butchers – rubbery chicken is not for me, quality not quantity, you want to eat the right stuff, but it's not easy
Female 25-29 single

Support services

"young parents group is a laugh, its supportive"
Female, 21-24, single with dependents

I like to come here, I get a break, I get time to myself, see if I was struggling I'd tell Lisa or my health visitor

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I found the budgeting class really helpful, I was really stressed beforehand but it made a difference

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

the budgeting course here was really helpful

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

the courses here are really helpful, they built my confidence, the Tuesday group shows us how to use a slow cooker, make homemade pasta and spaghetti

Bolognese, curry I've used all of them since

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I can't get sure start vouchers cos my partner works, they say I get too much but I don't, my Dad helps me out

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I get healthy snack vouchers 8 tokens, 4 for the wee man and 4 for myself cos I'm pregnant, Health visitor stamps it, they are very helpful

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

on week we make things and the other we talk, cooking courses are really helpful, the place here is great, the wee man enjoys the company, the staff are really good, I've made friends here.

Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

they've offered up things to me here - they've really helped me by taking the stress out of talking to the benefits people

Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

to us, the service offered here has been a life saver. They showed us there was a way to live without having to worry. I am not worried anymore; not as anxious, not struggling now

Female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I find it mentally helpful coming here (HUB) I enjoy it

Female, 50-54 couple with dependants

Places like this (HUB) are great; they're supportive and give me confidence, they all encourage me, it's great

Female, 25-29 single

Its helpful to come here (HUB) cos it gave me experience (of cooking) gives me confidence I dinnae like it when there are hundreds of people

Female 16-20 single

It's great...I've got some serious problems, depression, tranzadol, the people here are really supportive I like the food garden. I'm gonna sign up for food classes here (HUB) see if I can get more confident
Female, 40-44 single with dependants

Foodbanks

I was offered the foodbank but I felt it wasn't enough for what I'd get, it wasn't worth it to go down there for a few tins
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

Social worker brought me food parcels, I was grateful, not at all embarrassed
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I was referred from here, (partners job change resulted in loss of income) I used the Whitburn foodbank, they were decent, I used it twice, got pasta and tins. I was nervous about going in.
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

we were changing benefits it took so long to sort it. I got recommended, I'd heard about it before, I don't know how I felt, I felt like it shouldn't have to be like that
Female, 21-24, couple with dependents

I used the foodbank at Boghall, Anne (WESLO) sorted me. I felt awkward at first, you know I should be able to budget. I just needed a bit of time. Some folk take the piss with foodbanks but that's not me, they were brilliant (foodbank) gave me tins and pasta and that"
Male, 40-44, couple with dependents

I shouldn't be there, you know, I had a smoke before I went in to calm me down, it was in Blackburn, they were great non-judgemental, had a wee cry with them, gave me pasta, tins, beans, cereal, washing up powder, they were so nice, so positive, one day, when I have enough, I'll get them a box of chocolates.
female, 40-44, couple with dependents

No, would never use them, Pride. I give to foodbanks, not for me, too embarrassing to be seen there.
female, 50-54, couple with dependents

I would use the foodbank, but my man would be devastated to think we were using it
female, 50-54, couple with dependents

It was embarrassing (to go) but it helped me; I wasn't accepting of any help (before) but they were really nice people
Female 25-29, single with dependant

Ann has asked me to go (to a foodbank) but it's for charity people – and I'm not charity – it's too embarrassing, I'd rather starve
Female, 55-59 single

I thought a bout using a foodbank, nobody knows how bad my situation is (because I'm employed) I don't talk to anyone about it – if people know that I didn't have any money then its embarrassing
Female 25-29 single

My benefit was muddled, Ann got me a food voucher. I didn't like using it 'cos I should have been able to cope, they asked too many questions, like do you really need this? I'd use it again but id still be as embarrassed
Female 16-20 single

It was embarrassing, my benefits were stopped, mucked about actually, Ann gave me the voucher, I went to Whitburn they were nice to me, it was difficult because I don't like asking people for anything
Female 30-34 single with dependants

Appendix 'C'

Self-Assessment Questionnaire

Client Survey

Do you ever have to make hard choices about the amount or quality of food that you buy for your household?

West Lothian Council and its partners are keen to learn from YOUR experience..... *please take time to answer a few questions*

Attitudes to food in your household:

1. In the last 12 months have you ever had reason to **worry** about not having enough food for your household due to a lack of money – please tick:
 - a. never
 - b. occasionally
 - c. frequently
2. In the last 12 months have you ever had reason to **worry** about not having sufficiently healthy or nutritious food for your household due to a lack of money – please tick:
 - a. never
 - b. occasionally
 - c. frequently

Experiences:

3. In the last 12 months have you ever not had enough food for you or others in your household due to lack of money – please tick:
 - a. never
 - b. occasionally
 - c. frequently
4. In the last 12 months have you ever reduced the quality of food you bought for your household due to a lack of money – please tick:
 - a. never
 - b. occasionally
 - c. frequently
5. In the last 12 months have you ever had to make difficult choices which meant giving up food e.g. to pay a bill or pay for transport – please tick:
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

... Please hand in your answers to a member of staff.



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

VOLUNTARY SECTOR GATEWAY WEST LoTHIAN

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform PDSP members of current activities being undertaken by Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSG) in providing an effective single point of access for support and advice and representing the interests of voluntary and community organisations within West Lothian.

B. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Notes the positives outcomes in regard to the work undertaken by Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) in supporting and representing the interests of voluntary and community organisations
2. Notes and welcomes the contents contained in the update report from VSGWL.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; providing equality of opportunities; making best use of our resources and working in partnership
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None
IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	None
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, resilient, cohesive and safe communities
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	£60,900 revenue funding approved by Council Executive for 2016/17.
VII Consideration at PDSP	Updates previously considered by the PDSP on 22 September and 1 December 2016.
VIII Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Introduction

The role of the third sector interface (TSI) is to provide an effective single point of access for support and advice for the third sector within a local area. It is expected that the TSI will provide a strong and cohesive conduit between the third sector and the local authority and Community Planning Partnership (CPP) and that it is well managed, governed and effective.

The TSI operating in West Lothian is the Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL). The VSGWL is a member of the West Lothian CPP. VSGWL receives grant funding from the Scottish Government Third Sector Unit and from West Lothian Council.

D2 Current Position

An update from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian (VSGWL) on the activities they have undertaken since the last meeting is attached to this report as (Appendix 1). Further reports will be provided to future Panel meetings.

E. CONCLUSION

This is the third report to the PDSP under the stewardship of the trustees elected in 2015, and subsequently re-elected at the 2016 Annual General Meeting (AGM). The report provides updates from across the range of activities undertaken by the TSI. Future reports will continue to map the progress of the organisation in seeking to deliver on its work plan agreed between the organisation, Scottish Government and West Lothian Council.

The format of both this and the update reports will be continuously reviewed in order to ensure that the PDSP is provided with the most relevant information.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

None

Appendices/Attachments: One

Appendix One – Update from Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian

Contact Person: Ross Paterson, Senior Policy Officer
Tel 01506281096, e-mail ross.paterson@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development and Regeneration

Date of meeting: 2 March 2017



VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND SCRUTINY PANEL

HEALTH CHECKS AND QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

REPORT BY HEAD OF PLANNING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND REGENERATION

A. PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform members of the Voluntary Organisations Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel of the results of the 2016/17 final round of Health Checks completed during January and February 2017.

The report also provides an update on joint working with Quality Scotland (QS) in relation to building on previous work in supporting third sector organisations to be in a position of both being able to secure a recognised quality accreditation while also providing sufficient evidence to council in regard to monitoring the outcomes being delivered through use of a self-assessment online tool.

B. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the PDSP;

1. Notes that the Health Check has proved to be an effective tool for monitoring the spending of voluntary organisations and encouraging continuous improvement;
2. Notes the circumstances that lead to a further Health Check being undertaken to cover 2016/17 and welcomes the news that the new online self-assessment tool has now been completed and will be used to measure and score service delivery for 2017/18;
3. Thanks Quality Scotland for their support in ensuring we can make use of the new online tool for 2017/18; and
4. Notes the results for 2016/17.

C. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

I Council Values	Focusing on our customers' needs; providing equality of opportunities; developing employees; making best use of our resources and working in partnership.
II Policy and Legal (including Strategic Environmental Assessment, Equality Issues, Health or Risk Assessment)	The report does not raise any health or risk assessment issues. No strategic environmental assessment is required.
III Implications for Scheme of Delegations to Officers	None.

IV Impact on performance and performance Indicators	An agreed method of assuring quality and continuous improvement is an integral constituent of the move to funding voluntary organisations to deliver agreed outcomes, and should increase performance against agreed indicators.
V Relevance to Single Outcome Agreement	We live in resilient, cohesive and safe communities.
VI Resources - (Financial, Staffing and Property)	None
VII Consideration at PDSP	Report to Voluntary Organisations PDSP on 5 June, 25 September 2014, 19 March and 11 June 2015 and 03 March 2016.
VIII Other consultations	None

D. TERMS OF REPORT

D1 Introduction

West Lothian Council is required under the duties of Best Value and Following the Public Pound to ensure that its investment in the voluntary sector is monitored and reviewed. In 2012 Council Executive agreed to move to encouraging and supporting voluntary organisations funded through the Voluntary Organisations Budget Report to a suite of externally accredited quality standards at a level appropriate to the size and complexity of the organisation.

Council, as a funder, places a strong emphasis not only on what organisations do and how they do it, but on also understanding and assessing the outcomes of what they do.

D2 Quality Scotland

In 2015 the PDSP agreed a recommendation to develop further discussions with Quality Scotland (QS) with a view to establishing a tailored quality framework aligned to the West Lothian Assessment Model (WLAM) as a self-assessment tool to streamline the Health Check process while also offering an on-line facility to both organisations and the council's officers monitoring the delivery of outcomes.

During 2016 QS progressed work on a number of options for the tool culminating in an agreement that the most appropriate and practical way forward was to use the online Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) tool already used with the vast majority of local authorities in Scotland.

Final details of costings in regard to use of the tool re licences are now underway in order to ensure no additional charge is laid on the voluntary organisations in question. In addition a timetable has been established to facilitate implementation of the new process with both link officers and participating voluntary organisations.

It had been planned that the new online tool would be available for use in the 2015/16 Health Check, however given the delay in QS deciding on the best option and timeline involved in bringing the new tool into use it was decided that it would be prudent to undertake one final round of the Health Check.

D3 Health Checks 2016/17

The Health Check produced in 2013 uses a framework, with weighting towards finance, to look at the key elements of the organisation such as its finance, governance, partnerships, performance, policies and procedures, staffing, user feedback and volunteering. A series of statements and prompts are provided under each main heading, which is then scored by way of a traffic light system. The more 'reds' recorded the greater is the risk to the organisation and the council as a purchaser of outcomes. The more 'greens' recorded suggests the organisation is less of a risk and may be a source of good practice from which other voluntary organisations could learn.

The Health Check has 58 questions. The completed results for 23 organisations in 16/17 show the following summary:

Number Received	Green	Amber	Red
1334	1324	10	0

The average was 58 (2015/16 fifty five) green, 0.4 (2015/16 four) amber, and 0 (2015/16 one) red.

E. CONCLUSION

The Health Check process has resulted in continuous improvement by all organisations resulting in higher number of green scores and subsequent reduction in both amber and red. However, it has now reached the point where there is no process of ensuring continuous improvement. Equally there is a growing emphasis in council and other partners towards self-assessment and innovative ways of monitoring the effectiveness of same.

The move to an online process already used by council will ensure investment in voluntary organisations can be monitored through the same system used internally while also guaranteeing a direct link to how resources are being utilised in meeting the Single Outcome Agreement.

F. BACKGROUND REFERENCES

The duty of Best Value is set out in the Local Government in Scotland Act 2003

Appendices/Attachments: One
Appendix 1 – Health Check Organisations List 2016/17

Contact Person: Ross Paterson, Senior Policy Officer
Tel 01506281096, e-mail, ross.paterson@westlothian.gov.uk

Craig McCorriston
Head of Planning, Economic Development And Regeneration

2 March 2017

Appendix 1

Number	Organisation	Link Officer	Amber	Green
1	Almond Valley Heritage Trust	Ross Paterson		58
2	Bennie Museum	Emma Peattie		58
3	Community Action Blackburn	Laura Wilson		58
4	Boghall Drop In Centre	Laura Wilson		58
5	Citizens Advice Bureau	Anne Stevenson		58
6	Craigshill Good Neighbour Network	Scott McKillop	2	56
7	Daisy Drop In	Ross Paterson	1	57
8	Dedridge Good Neighbourhood Network	Ross Paterson		58
9	Firefly Arts	Laura Tyrell		58
10	Handicabs Lothian (now HcL)	Graham Whitelaw		58
11	Knightsridge Adventure Project	Ross Paterson	2	57
12	Ladywell Neighbourhood Network	Ross Paterson		58
13	Linlithgow Heritage Trust	Emma Peattie		58
14	Linlithgow Link	Graham Whitelaw		58
15	Linlithgow Young Peoples Project	Dougie Grierson		58
16	Lothian Community Transport	Graham Whitelaw		58
17	Lothian Shopmobility	Graham Whitelaw		58
18	Victim Support	Dougie Grierson		58
19	West Lothian 50+ Network	Graham Whitelaw		58
20	West Lothian Credit Union	Elaine Nisbet	2	56
21	West Lothian Youth Action Project	Ross Paterson	2	56
22	Whitburn CDT	Ross Paterson		58
23	VSGWL	Clare Stewart	1	57
	TOTAL 23x58=1334		10	1324

Voluntary Organisations PDSP Workplan

1.	An Enterprising Third Sector	To inform members of ongoing progress in developing more enterprising third sector organisations and of plans to review and update the framework		Quarterly	June 2017	No	
2.	Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian	To update members on outcomes from joint working programme		Quarterly	June 2017	No	
3.	West Lothian Armed Forces Community Covenant	To update members on progress made in implementing the WLAFFCC Action Plan		Six Monthly	June 2017	No	
4.	Pensioners Xmas Fund	To inform members of proposed allocations for 2017/18 from the Pensioners Xmas Fund Budget		Annually	June 2017	No	
5.	Employers Supported Volunteering	To inform members of plans to restart a programme and identify service champions		Six Monthly	June 2017	Yes	
6.	An Enterprising Third Sector	To inform members of ongoing progress in developing more enterprising third sector organisations and on progress in updating the framework		Quarterly	Sept 2017	No	
7.	Voluntary Sector Gateway West Lothian	To update members on outcomes from joint working programme		Quarterly	Sept 2017	No	
8.	Gala & Other Events Fund	To inform members of the final budget position		Annually	Sept 2017	No	

Voluntary Organisations PDSP Workplan

9.	Health Checks & Quality Improvement	To inform members of progress in moving to the online self- assessment model		One off	Sept 2017	No
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