



**Experiences of staff and volunteers involved in emergency food  
provisioning for families with school-aged children during  
Scotland's Covid-19 lockdowns**

**Report and findings**

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## Contents

1. Introduction.....	4
2. Methods.....	7
3. Results: summary and discussion .....	9
3.1 Characteristics of respondents and their organisations .....	9
3.2 Perceived needs of FWSAC before (including during school holidays) and during the Covid-19 lockdowns .....	12
3.2.1 Perceived needs prior to Covid-19 lockdowns .....	12
3.2.2 Perceived needs and services provided during Covid-19 lockdowns.....	14
3.3 Type of organisation and ability to respond to needs during Covid-19 lockdowns.....	19
3.4 The perceived impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns on organisations and the services they provide .....	24
3.5 Support from partner organisations, the community and public authorities .....	28
3.6 Support required to keep FWSAC out of food insecurity should there be a future lockdown and during school holidays outside of lockdown.....	33
4. Findings and recommendations .....	37
References.....	42
Appendix 1 Interview schedule .....	46
Appendix 2: The Scottish Government’s six-fold urban-rural classification .....	49
Appendix 3: Results in detail.....	50
1. The needs of families before (including during school holidays) and during the Covid-19 lockdowns.....	50
2. Needs and services provided during the Covid-19 lockdowns .....	53
3. Differences between the two lockdowns.....	56
4. Organisations and participants positions.....	57
4.1 Foodbanks .....	58
4.2 Foodbanks plus.....	58
4.3 Community Hubs .....	59
4.4 Local Authorities and Others .....	60
4.5 Blurred distinction between organisations .....	60
5. Position within the organisation .....	66
5.1 Managers and project workers .....	66

5.2 Board Members and Volunteers.....	67
6. The impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns on organisations and the supports provided.....	68
6.1 Impact on staff and volunteers .....	68
6.2 Impact on resources.....	69
6.3 Implications for the future.....	71
7. Supports from collaborators, the community and the local authorities.....	72
7.1 Collaborators .....	72
7.2 Community support.....	73
7.3 Local Authority Support.....	74
7.4 Further supports from collaborators, the community and the authorities .....	74
8. Supports required for future lockdowns and school holidays outside of lockdowns.....	76
8.1 Future Lockdowns .....	76
8.2 Supporting families during school holidays.....	79

## List of Tables

Table 1	Number of organisations and interviews by urban/rural classification	10
Table 2	List of participants by role, organisation and location	11
Table 3	Summary of main service(s) provided the organisations listed in Table 2	19

# 1. Introduction

The Scottish Government seeks to take “a human rights approach to tackling food insecurity”<sup>1</sup>. It has undertaken to introduce, as far as its devolved competence allows, a legal right to adequate food<sup>2</sup>. This includes a commitment to end the need for foodbanks by introducing a Minimum Income Guarantee and Universal Basic Services, and responding to food insecurity by investing in cash-first partnerships between welfare and health professionals and by piloting the use of shopping vouchers in place of food bank referrals<sup>4</sup>. The policy framework required to end the need for foodbanks and uphold the right to food is contained in the Good Food Nation Bill, which was introduced in the Scottish Parliament in October 2021<sup>5</sup>. These initiatives build on years of work that has sought to understand<sup>6</sup> and tackle<sup>7</sup> food insecurity in Scotland.

This report contributes to the knowledge base on food insecurity by reporting on a qualitative study with staff and volunteers working in organisations which provided emergency food to families with school aged children (FWSAC) during the Covid-19 lockdowns. The methods used are described in section two. Section three summarises and discusses the results. In order to keep the main report short, the rich data underpinning the results are presented in Appendix 3, where the ‘voices’ of the research participants predominate. Section four sets out the main findings and recommendations. The remainder of this section contextualises the study.

The Covid-19 pandemic has seen two Scottish lockdowns<sup>8</sup>. The first began on 26 March 2020, from when people could only go outside to buy food, exercise once per day, or go to work if they were classified as key workers. Restrictions started to be eased in late May, when Scotland

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<sup>1</sup> Scottish Government (2021a, iii).

<sup>2</sup> Food insecurity is ‘the inability to consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food that is useful for health in socially acceptable ways’ (Dowler 2003).

<sup>3</sup> Scottish Government (2021b, 8-9).

<sup>4</sup> Scottish Government (2022a).

<sup>5</sup> Scottish Government (2021b, 6).

<sup>6</sup> Between 2017 and 2019 the Scottish Government collected data on levels of food insecurity in the annual Scottish Health Survey and funded research into food insecurity through, e.g. through the RESAS Strategic Research Programme.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. NHS Health Scotland (2017) undertook to ‘assess causes and prevalence of food insecurity in order to scope the scale of the challenge for effective policy responses’; and the Scottish Government outlined aims to reduce childhood poverty and hunger in The Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan 2018-22 (Scottish Government 2018).

<sup>8</sup> A fuller explanation of the two Covid-19 lockdowns can be found at <https://data.gov.scot/coronavirus-covid-19/index.html>, from which references to dates in this and the following paragraph are taken (unless stated otherwise).

entered Phase 1 of the routemap<sup>9</sup> out of lockdown, with outdoor work being allowed and people being permitted to leave their homes once a day for non-essential reasons. In June the Scottish Government announced that Scotland had entered Phase 2 of the routemap: people could meet two other households outside and create ‘support bubbles’ in extended households. On 10 July it was announced that Phase 3 had been entered and that travel throughout Scotland was permitted. Children returned to school at the start of the 2020-21 academic year.

A move towards a second Covid-19 lockdown began in late September 2020, when a nationwide curfew on hospitality was implemented. Protection Levels, with associated restrictions, were introduced at the beginning of November<sup>10</sup>. From 26 December Scotland entered Protection Level 4, the most restricted. A second national lockdown was declared on 5 January 2021, with restrictions being tightened further on 16 January. This remained in place until late April 2021 when stay at home guidance was relaxed and it was announced that children would return to school after the spring holidays. On 14 May most of Scotland moved to Protection Level 2 and then to Level zero in July. On 9 August Scotland moved beyond Level zero but some measures, such as mask wearing in indoor public places, remained in force<sup>11</sup>.

McKendrick and Campbell (2020) conducted research for the Poverty and Inequality Commission which examined local action taken in Scotland to tackle food insecurity during the first lockdown. That study surveyed the experiences and opinions of frontline organisations working in communities across Scotland to tackle food insecurity. It identified important topics that related closely to aspects of the Scottish Government Rural and Environment Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) division’s 2016-22 Strategic Research Programme. Section two set out how these cross-cutting topics were explored further in this study.

The premise of this research is that examining the experiences of staff and volunteers involved in emergency food provisioning for FWSAC during Scotland’s Covid-19 lockdowns would

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<sup>9</sup> Further details of the routemap out of the Covid-19 lockdown can be found at <https://www.gov.scot/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-scotlands-route-map/>

<sup>10</sup> For details of restrictions operating at different protection levels see <https://www.gov.scot/binaries/content/documents/govscot/publications/advice-and-guidance/2020/10/coronavirus-covid-19-protection-levels/documents/covid-19-protection-levels-summary-information-on-what-you-can-and-cannot-do/covid-19-protection-levels-summary-information-on-what-you-can-and-cannot-do/govscot%3Adocument/COVID-19%2Bprotection%2Blevels%2B-%2Bsummary%2Binformation%2Bon%2Bwhat%2Byou%2Bcan%2Band%2Bcannot%2Bdo.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> See <https://www.gov.scot/news/scotland-to-move-beyond-level-0/>.

shed light on what lessons could be learnt from a period of societal emergency and provide insights on not only dealing with food insecurity in FWSAC should there be another lockdown but also at other times of challenge. For example, low-income families with young children may be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity (Douglas *et al.* 2015, 2018) and it has been argued that their vulnerability can increase during school holidays due to the absence of free school meals and the increased costs of having children at home all day for a prolonged period of time (Scottish Government 2016). Indeed, several programmes aimed at eliminating food insecurity during school holidays have been run (Boettger 2017; Scottish Government 2019<sup>12</sup>) and additional funding for third sector and community organisations during the lockdowns was made available (Scottish Government 2022b)<sup>13</sup>. The importance of building understanding of these issues is underlined by research which indicates that childhood food insecurity can have long-term implications for children's physical and mental health (Cook and Frank 2008; Fram *et al.* 2015; Stickley and Leinsalu 2018).

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<sup>12</sup> An initial intention of this study was to focus on how these organisations coped during the Covid-19 lockdowns but this did not prove possible. Indeed, it is uncertain how many were operating in 2020.

<sup>13</sup> For full details of these funds see <https://community-funding-mapping-1-1-scotgov.hub.arcgis.com/>.

## 2. Methods

This research had to be conducted while experiences of Covid-19 lockdowns were relatively fresh in participants' minds. Therefore, the method adopted drew on 'rapid qualitative enquiry' (Fulop *et al.* 2020; Vindrola-Padros 2020), which has been used in the management of responses to public health and other emergencies. This study also draws on grounded theory methods (q.v. Bryant 2017, 89), though here the generation of experiential insights, rather than theory, was the priority. The methodological principles underpinning this research were: simultaneous data collection and analysis; and constructing analytical codes and categories from the data collected rather than relying on pre-determined codes alone.

Qualitative data were collected through individual guided interviews with staff and volunteers working in organisations involved with emergency food provisioning of FWSAC during at least one Covid-19 lockdown. Guided interviews resemble semi-structured interviews in being conversational and centred on a small number of topics. They differ by being more open (branching questions and prompts need not be prepared in advance) and by being part of an iterative research design, whereby the questions asked and issues followed up in later interviews can develop based on data gathered in earlier interviews (Morse 2012). The interview guide, which was developed from topics identified by McKendrick and Campbell (2020), is in Appendix 1. This guided the direction of the interviews but, for the reasons noted above, some ranged more widely.

Researchers' contacts and internet searches were used to identify organisations involved with providing emergency food to FWSAC during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Efforts were made to ensure that participants from different types of organisation serving urban and rural areas were interviewed (see section 3.1)<sup>14</sup>. Sixty-nine organisations were asked if they would pass on an interview invitation to staff and volunteers involved with emergency food provisioning to FWSAC during lockdown. Thirty-eight organisations did so, and from them 47 individuals were interviewed between February and May 2021.

Interviews were conducted by telephone and lasted between forty and eighty minutes. All were recorded and transcribed in full. Participants were pseudonymised and organisations are

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<sup>14</sup> This is a 'stratified purposeful' sampling strategy (Creswell 2007, 125-9).

identified only by their functions and by their location type according to the Scottish Government's six-fold urban-rural classification<sup>15</sup>. Interview transcripts were coded manually in NVivo 12. Analysis was iterative-inductive, drawing on themes prominent in the literature and in McKendrick and Campbell (2020). Themes included interviewees' perceptions of: meeting needs identified during lockdown; the resilience of frontline organisations/programmes; differences between frontline organisations/programmes; identifying and sharing new and collaborative practice; and the perceived role of Government policy and support. As analysis progressed emerging themes were added and coded to.

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<sup>15</sup> Q.v. Appendix 2.



### 3. Results: summary and discussion

This section summarises the study's main findings. Section 3.1 characterises the respondents and the organisations they work for. Findings from the thematic analysis of interview data are summarised in the following sub-sections. Quotations from interviewees are kept to a minimum for economy. The rich data underpinning the findings are presented in Appendix 3, where participants' voices predominate. Section 3.2 explores the perceived needs of families before (including during school holidays) and during the Covid-19 lockdowns, identifying precarious groups. This leads into a discussion of unmet needs identified during lockdown. Interviewees' reflections on the types of organisation providing emergency food provisioning to FWSAC, and the impact of lockdowns on them, are summarised sections 3.3 and 3.4 respectively. Section 3.5 discusses participants' views on support provided to organisations from other bodies, the community and public authorities, with the aim of identifying new and collaborative practice. Section 3.6 builds on this by outlining the supports that participants thought would be required in order to ensure food security among FWSAC in future times of stress (e.g. another lockdown, school holidays).

#### 3.1 Characteristics of respondents and their organisations

Forty-seven people were interviewed, from 38 organisations (Table 1). Three people were interviewed from two organisations<sup>16</sup>, with two people being interviewed from a further five<sup>17</sup>. As Table 1 shows, geographical stratification produced a spread of organisations and participants across Scotland's four types of urban settlement. Although only one interview was secured from an organisation based in a rural area, this does not mean that rural experiences went unrecorded. The distribution of foodbanks in Scotland strongly suggests that small towns tend to act as service centres for their surrounding rural areas<sup>18</sup>. That is illustrated in this study by a participant who explained that their foodbank covers a wide area:

What we do, we are quite different from food banks in the city in the sense that we don't give food directly to the public... because we don't know who our recipients are. We give food out through other agencies like social services, housing, Women's Aid,

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<sup>16</sup> Foodbank (1) and Community Hub (2) in Table 2.

<sup>17</sup> Foodbank (3), Foodbanks Plus (1) and (3), and Community Hubs (1) and (5) in Table 2.

<sup>18</sup> This analysis is contained in an unpublished paper: D Watts, R-M Savela, JS McKenzie and P Abbot 'Food insecurity and the 'liberal' welfare state. A preliminary analysis of food banks in Scotland'.

Citizens Advice et cetera. So what we do is we collect food donations that are given in the various shops, unpack them, date check them and make up bags of food which we then give to the agencies. Now you'll want to know how we're different during the pandemic... we give out food in the way we do because of the size of the area that we cover, yeah. I mean if we had a food bank that people came in and got food in the main town, we'd only serve the community there. But because we serve communities miles away, 30 odd miles away, yeah, and even further, we have to distribute through the agencies, yeah. [038-Mary]<sup>19</sup>

Thus, we are confident that interviewees from organisations based in accessible and remote small towns had, and were able to communicate, understanding of issues affecting rural areas.

**Table 1: Number of organisations and interviews by urban/rural classification**

Urban/rural classification (q.v. Appendix 2)	Number of organisations	Number of interviews
1 Large Urban Areas	10	12
2 Other Urban Areas	14	18
3 Accessible Small Towns	6	8
4 Remote Small Towns	6	7
5 Accessible Rural	0	0
6 Remote Rural	1	1
N/A (national remit)	1	1
Totals	38	47

Most interviewees were employed by the organisation through which they were recruited (13 as project workers, 25 as managers), with another six being non-executive board members and three volunteers (Table 2, overleaf). However, the distinctions between the different types of employees and volunteers within these organisations tend to be flexible. For example, one volunteer explained that they made up the rotas for the foodbank whilst another explained that they controlled the finances. Similarly, managers often reported that they were on the frontline handing out parcels to those in need<sup>20</sup>. With the exception of local authorities, the organisations from which interviewees were recruited did not lend themselves to easy classification. This is partly because, as discussed in section 3.3, their flexible organisational structures allow them to adjust the services that they offer quickly, for example in response to changes in demand. Thus, the types of organisation listed in column four of Table 2, which are based on the characteristics listed in Table 3 (in section 3.3), is both tentative and dynamic.

<sup>19</sup> See also: Andrew in section 3.3; Lois in Appendix 3 section 4.3; and Mary in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 3 section 5.

**Table 2: List of participants by role, organisation and location**

<b>Number</b>	<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Organisation (identifier)</b>	<b>Location</b>
001	Tanya	Project Worker	Foodbank Plus (1)	Remote Small Town
002	Phyllis	Manager	Foodbank Plus (1)	Remote Small Town
003	Stewart	Manager	Foodbank Plus (2)	Large Urban Area
004	Claire	Manager	Other (1)	Accessible Small Town
005	Edmund	Board Member	Foodbank (1)	Other Urban Area
006	Andrew	Project Worker	Local Authority (1)	Other Urban Area
007	Sarah	Board Member	Foodbank Plus (3)	Accessible Small Town
008	Laura	Manager	Other (2)	National
009	Anna	Project Worker	Community Hub (1)	Large Urban Area
010	Daisy	Project Worker	Community Hub (1)	Large Urban Area
011	Harry	Board Member	Foodbank (2)	Other Urban Area
012	Sally	Project Worker	Community Hub (2)	Accessible Small Town
013	Isla	Manager	Community Hub (3)	Remote Small Town
014	Frances	Project Work	Community Hub (2)	Accessible Small Town
015	Glenda	Project Worker	Community Hub (2)	Accessible Small Town
016	Tom	Volunteer	Foodbank (1)	Other Urban Area
017	Gemma	Manager	Community Hub (4)	Remote Small Town
018	Cathy	Manager	Foodbank (3)	Other Urban Area
019	Dottie	Project Worker	Community Hub (5)	Other Urban Area
020	Jana	Project Worker	Community Hub (6)	Large Urban Area
021	David	Board Member	Foodbank (1)	Other Urban Area
022	Ruby	Project Worker	Community Hub (7)	Other Urban Area
023	Judy	Manager	Foodbank Plus (4)	Large Urban Area
024	Des	Manager	Foodbank Plus (5)	Other Urban Area
025	Cindy	Project Worker	Foodbank Plus (6)	Remote Small Town
026	Lucy	Project Worker	Local Authority (2)	Accessible Small Town
027	Mark	Manager	Foodbank Plus (3)	Other Urban Area
028	Linda	Board Member	Community Hub (8)	Remote Small Town
029	Julie	Manager	Other (3)	Large Urban Area
030	Maria	Manager	Foodbank (3)	Other Urban Area
031	Lisa	Manager	Community Hub (9)	Other Urban Area
032	Karen	Manager	Foodbank (4)	Accessible Small Town
033	Neil	Manager	Foodbank (5)	Other Urban Area
034	Mike	Project Worker	Foodbank (6)	Large Urban Area
035	Helga	Manager	Foodbank (7)	Remote Small Town
036	Sue	Manager	Foodbank (8)	Accessible Small Town
037	Lois	Manager	Foodbank Plus (7)	Other Urban Area
038	Mary	Board Member	Foodbank (9)	Remote Rural Area
039	Liz	Manager	Foodbank (10)	Large Urban Area
040	Bet	Manager	Community Hub (5)	Other Urban Area
041	Carrie	Manager	Foodbank (11)	Large Urban Area
042	Dick	Volunteer	Foodbank (12)	Other Urban Area
043	Louise	Manager	Foodbank (13)	Other Urban Area
044	May	Manager	Foodbank (14)	Other Urban Area
045	Luke	Volunteer	Foodbank (15)	Other Urban Area
046	Cat	Manager	Foodbank (16)	Large Urban Area
047	Meg	Manager	Foodbank (17)	Large Urban Area

## 3.2 Perceived needs of FWSAC before (including during school holidays) and during the Covid-19 lockdowns

### 3.2.1 Perceived needs prior to Covid-19 lockdowns

Many participants reported that, prior to the lockdowns, FWSAC constituted a smaller proportion of their client base than groups such as single-person households:

I would say about 40% of our clients would be families with school age children. We get an awful lot more single people than we do anything else. [033 – Neil]<sup>21</sup>

This is consistent with previous findings that single and two-person households without children constitute the largest proportion of those who access emergency food provisions<sup>22</sup>.

Where FWSAC did ask for support, participants reported that their needs and the services provided for them were often different from those of other clients. At the most basic level, the size of emergency food parcels increased in proportion to the number of household members and additional items such as sweets, crisps and sanitary products were often added:

Oh, yeah, they're larger and yeah, we obviously taken into account things like lots more cereal, if it's a family we'll tend to do things like a big bag of pasta with hotdogs and your pasta sauce, things like that we'd put in for the kids, for a large family. So it's dependent, we try to have a balanced food parcel generally to provide food for two to three days for anyone that comes in for it. But if it's a family then, yeah, you're tailoring for that. [010 – Daisy]

It's difficult to be precise because it varies. But we're very clear that within our delivery schedules for each week, we know specifically who we're going to. Are we going to a single adult family, an adult that might have a partner, or are we going to a household that might have a partner and children, and we need to know the age of those children. Whilst we don't do bespoke deliveries, obviously we send more stuff out to a family, than we do to an individual. [011 – Harry]<sup>23</sup>

Participants reported that their organisations had also adapted other services, such as classes and community meals, to make them more family friendly<sup>24</sup>. Indeed, there were those organisations who focused all, or part, of their services on providing for the specific needs of

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<sup>21</sup> See also Tom and David in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>22</sup> E.g. Dowler 1997; Douglas *et al.* 2015; Tarasuk *et al.* 2016; Ejebu *et al.* 2019.

<sup>23</sup> See also Cathy, Glenda, Claire. Daisy and Laura in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>24</sup> See Glenda and Claire in Appendix 3 section 1.

FWSAC<sup>25</sup>. However, one participant suggested that FWSAC may be less likely than other groups to access emergency food aid when in need<sup>26</sup>.

Most participants<sup>27</sup> said that their organisations saw increased demand from FWSAC during school holidays, with Christmas being flagged as particularly busy by some:

We would definitely find that it was busier but it was more that you know, everyone would be coming along to either sign up or you know come to collect the bags of food. I think, yeah so it was just a case of you know, like the kids weren't in school and you know they came along to collect the parcel. [020 –Jana]<sup>28</sup>

The demand from FWSAC was principally for emergency food parcels, but other services such as community meals and social support were also required:

Well sometimes they come in, sometimes they'll come in for lunch and things like that because... and they'll want... they'll need to have some relationship time you know, be able to talk to other people because if they're on their own then they're isolated and they need adult company and a bit of a chat and somewhere where they can go... especially if they've got children who have got additional needs they can be a bit uncomfortable about going into a café or something like that or if they haven't got much money, so they'll quite often bring... it's a treat time to come out and get some nice food and things like that for £1 and for them to come and see other people. So the sociable side of it people access us for. [002 – Phyllis]<sup>29</sup>

Participants felt that this increase in demand was related to the increasing costs of having children at home all day – heating, snacks, entertainment – and the absence of free school meals<sup>30</sup>. This is in line with previous research findings<sup>31</sup>. Thus, many participants reported that their organisations provided a broader range of food and social support during school holidays:

Prior to Covid we were also working with the local authority, and a Community Football Trust running a programme that's called "Food and fun", which took place during the school holidays, and it was targeted at those kids primarily who were entitled to school meals that wouldn't be getting them during that period, but also other... it was available to other kids that might be on a low income so they would also benefit from that. Those kind of initiatives took place if I remember correct was in deprived areas. [003 – Stewart]<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> See Laura, Daisy and Dottie in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>26</sup> See Phyllis in section 3.4.

<sup>27</sup> Though not all: see, e.g. Sue, Lois, Louise, Neil and Meg in Appendix section 1.

<sup>28</sup> See also Judy, Lisa and Daisy, Harry and Glenda in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>29</sup> See also Tanya and Dottie in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>30</sup> See Judy, and Daisy, and Glenda Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>31</sup> E.g. Scottish Government 2016; Long *et al.* 2021; Watts and McKenzie 2021a, 2021b.

<sup>32</sup> See also Tanya and Dottie in Appendix 3 section 1.

The data also suggest that there may be greater demand for food from FWSAC during summer school holidays in urban areas<sup>33</sup> compared with rural<sup>34</sup>. That is, the nine participants who reported no difference or a reduction in demand for emergency food during school holidays were located in urban categories 1 to 3<sup>35</sup> whilst the twenty-two participants who reported an increase in demand were operating in areas categorised in areas 1 to 4 with 8 being in category 1 (large urban) areas. This difference appears less prominent during Christmas holidays<sup>36</sup> and there appears to be a more equal balance in social support requirements during school holidays throughout the year<sup>37</sup>. This perceived difference in demand could result from different geographies of implementation of Scottish Government programmes by different local authorities (Boettger 2017; Scottish Government 2019), bias in the sample and differences between similar-sounding services provided by organisations in different areas. Nevertheless, the possibility that there may be geographical differences in demand cannot be ruled out.

### 3.2.2 Perceived needs and services provided during Covid-19 lockdowns

When the first Covid-19 lockdown began many participants reported significant increases in demand for emergency food supplies:

Okay, so up to February, March 2020 we might have given out on a busy week 30, maybe 35 food parcels. After the lockdown kicked in it went up, skyrocketed, at one point we actually gave out 200 bags of food in one day and it was just bedlam. It seems to have eased down a little now so we're giving out around 80 bags of food per week. [021 – David]

To give you an idea, May 2019, we gave out 32 parcels in that month. May 2020, we gave out 320 parcels. [007 – Sarah]<sup>38</sup>

A few said that their organisation did not experience an increase in demand for their services during the Covid-19 lockdowns. This they ascribed to growing numbers of emergency food providers emerging to cater for increased demand:

I think the black and white figures show that we've had a reduction in families and children just slightly over the last year compared to the year before. We think that that might be because... well from our perspective, it's obviously different in different parts of the country, but here there was a massive growth in local community food help, especially rurally but also in the town and it was almost like you couldn't move for food, everybody was offering people free food and delivering things to people's doors

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<sup>33</sup> See Jana above and see Judy and Daisy in Appendix 3 section 1 .

<sup>34</sup> See Sue, Lois and Neil in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>35</sup> The definitions of these categories are in Appendix 2.

<sup>36</sup> See Harry and Glenda in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>37</sup> See Phyllis above and Tanya and Dottie in Appendix 3 section 1.

<sup>38</sup> See also Mark and Carrie in Appendix 3 section 2.

and there was boxes of food in the streets, the council had an emergency food response. So it kind of cushioned us and our figures were distorted and they have still remained a bit distorted in the last year because of all these other community hubs and food providers that have come up out of the pandemic. [044 – Mary]<sup>39</sup>

This indicates that the additional funds and supports made available by the Scottish Government (Scottish Government 2022b) may have been useful for meeting the increased demand for emergency food during the lockdowns.

Many participants explained that not only was there a steep increase in demand for emergency food provisioning<sup>40</sup>, but also for services such as benefit advice, utility top-ups and IT support:

It was mainly food, but as word got round... I mean obviously I couldn't have sit down appointments, which is what I would normally do; I couldn't do that for social distancing. I wouldn't have been able to do that anyway with the number of people coming to the door, I wouldn't have been able to give anyone more than five minutes. So I was giving people five minutes at the door where they were giving me a very basic quick rundown of their situation and I was able to advise them on what they should do or who they should go and speak to. [027 – Mark]

We got a lot of funding for tech digital support. There was a lot of support out there financially for it. I think we were very fortunate that there is a few of my colleagues and myself, that are quite technically minded, so we were able to offer that support ourselves and one of them had been on a course about setting technology up with our elderly and things like that. The Scottish Government recently gave us a few laptops to give out to families and things, and the elders too. So, we're looking at that at the moment and getting that sorted as well. [019 – Dottie]<sup>41</sup>

In addition, a significant increase was reported in FWSAC coming forward for support during the Covid-19 lockdowns who had not been seen before:

I would say, I mean it's obviously, very, very, varied but I'd say there's two which stand out for me, one is where somebody has been made redundant and you know its flagged up something which I'm sure you're picking up elsewhere is that, if you've got somebody who's working on a minimum wage job living in social housing, and they lose that minimum wage job, it isn't a catastrophe because the housing benefit will full cover the rent and most of the council tax, and even though they'll see a drop in income, they still have you know, just about enough income to cover the other necessities. But if somebody's paying quite a high mortgage and they lose their job and they've probably also got a car on HP, the benefit system doesn't touch the sides. And they're immediately in a very, very precarious financial situation. So we've seen a lot of people who never in a million years would have thought they'd need the services of people like us, suddenly needing them. The other one we've seen several of is large families with five or six kids, where inevitably the mum is at home as you know looking after the kids,

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<sup>39</sup> See also Dick in Appendix 6 section 2

<sup>40</sup> See also Linda, Carrie and David in Appendix 3 section 2

<sup>41</sup> See also Julie and Sarah in Appendix six section 2.

dad's working and before the pandemic, you know they're not living high on the hog and incomings are probably just about covering outgoings, but if the dad is furloughed and they have to take a 20% income drop then it's a big enough of a drop in income to make them need the likes of ourselves. [024 – Des]<sup>42</sup>

These families were coming forward for emergency food provisions but also for benefits advice, support with home-schooling, utility top-ups, and IT provisions and support:

The fear of universal credit hit hard after summer last year because a massive thing is that people are scared of applying for universal credit because they just don't understand it. So my advice on universal credit after summer specifically to families and young families or low paid families or families where one person's been laid off, that advice skyrocketed. There was so many people applying for universal credit after summer last year. *In the city* it went I think from 7,500 or 9,500 universal credit claimants to 37,000, so that's a lot of people, that's what 300% increase near enough, and like I said, the benefits system is not designed to give... to spoon feed people information, which I kind of understand, I get the ethos behind it, but I do think you should let people know that that's how you work even if it's just a case of saying, "If you've got questions ask", they don't even do that. So I found a lot of the time saying, "Right, you need to be going and applying for this", or, "You need to be going and doing that, speak to someone about this, speak to someone about that". [027 – Mark]<sup>43</sup>

Participants felt that increased demand from FWSAC during the Covid-19 lockdowns arose for similar reasons to the increases in demand for their services experienced during school holidays outside of lockdowns. That is, the Covid-19 lockdowns highlighted that welfare benefits may not cover the extra costs attached to having children at home for a prolonged period without free school meals.

However, participants also felt that increased demand from FWSAC for support services from their organisations emerged during lockdown for other reasons. First, some pointed to the detrimental effect of furlough on FWSAC: many who experienced a twenty percent reduction in their income were thought to be struggling to make ends meet<sup>44</sup>. This is understandable given that families on low incomes spend larger proportions of their household income on food than those with higher incomes<sup>45</sup>. Secondly, redundancy rates increased rapidly during the first

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<sup>42</sup> See also Cat in Appendix 3 section 2.

<sup>43</sup> See Sue, , Carrie, and Bet in Appendix 3 section 2.

<sup>44</sup> See Des above and Cat in Appendix 3 section 2.

<sup>45</sup> In the UK, DEFRA's Family Food survey found that the average 10.6 per cent of household spend went on food in 2018/19, while for the lowest 20 per cent of households by equivalised income it was higher at 14.7 per cent. See <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-food-201819/family-food-201819#household-spending-on-food> accessed 17/1/22.



lockdown<sup>46</sup> and this was considered to be particularly problematic for FWSAC with mortgages and other debts as these expenses would not be covered by social security payments<sup>47</sup> should families need to claim them<sup>48</sup>. Furthermore, it was reported that many families requesting help from participants' organisations had never had recourse to social security before and were unaware of how that system worked<sup>49</sup>. Such families may be in a particularly precarious position when confronted by emergencies such as the Covid-19 lockdowns, because they lack the social and embodied cultural capitals<sup>50</sup> to navigate the social security system which may, in turn, not provide enough support to cover their outgoings.

Participants reported varying experiences in relation to the demand for services and the perceived needs of their clients between the first and second lockdowns. Some explained that demand for their services remained consistently high across both:

No, no. There wasn't any difference... We continued it right through. The demand remained high. It's only just... what are we in? March I think was the first we saw it dipping again. [035 – Helga]<sup>51</sup>

Others perceived that demand for their services was higher during the first lockdown:

I think there was more people in the first lockdown that we delivered out to. We are still delivering but not to the same scale... So I suppose that would be the only real difference and we're not dealing with nearly the same numbers as we were at the beginning of the first lockdown. The first lockdown was much busier for us. It was crazy numbers. Whereas we're kind of back down to our kind of what we're used to dealing with, if that makes sense. [018 – Cathy]<sup>52</sup>

Some participants ascribed this to the emergence of a range of other emergency food providers rather than a reduction in need<sup>53</sup>. Others, however, felt that demand from FWSAC was lower in the second lockdown as families had developed strategies to obviate the need for emergency food aid. This suggests that it could be productive to learn more about the strategies that

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<sup>46</sup> See, e.g.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/articles/labourmarketeconomicanalysisquarterly/december2020#vacancies-and-redundancies-in-the-economy>; accessed 13/1/22.

<sup>47</sup> See Step Change Debt Charity (2020) available at [https://www.scotlanddebt.co.uk/debt-advice-scotland?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwJyKqS-9QIViO7tCh3UHAiTEAAYASAAEgIRTvD\\_BwE](https://www.scotlanddebt.co.uk/debt-advice-scotland?gclid=EAIaIQobChMIwJyKqS-9QIViO7tCh3UHAiTEAAYASAAEgIRTvD_BwE).

<sup>48</sup> See Des above.

<sup>49</sup> See Mark above and Carrie in Appendix 3 section 2.

<sup>50</sup> For a definition and discussion of these different forms of capital, see Bourdieu (1986).

<sup>51</sup> See also Cindy in Appendix 3 section 3.

<sup>52</sup> See Bet and Des in Appendix 3 section 3.

<sup>53</sup> See Dick in Appendix 3 section 2.

FWSAC developed during lockdown, as it might yield practical insights that could be shared with others.

On the other hand, there were participants who reported an increase in demand for their services during the second Covid-19 lockdown:

Yeah, I think this one [*the second lockdown*] is far increased. We have much more food requests, we have more requests for the jigsaws and mental health packs ... a young family moving in had nothing. Yeah, because they've been given redundancy, people are much more anxious, they really are. [004 – Claire]<sup>54</sup>

Some put this down to the impact of the second Covid-19 lockdown on the tourism and hospitality industries:

I would have said we saw an increase in the second lockdown... we have certainly seen an increase in our families. In the second lockdown, we saw an increase, and basically since then there's been a continual increase in families coming to us... I think it's two-fold thing. I think part of it is that many of the families, certainly in our area, will have somebody working in hospitality and the job's either completely disappeared or hours were dropped and money wasn't available, so they needed to find somewhere. Some of our other families... we have a big Eastern European group in the area, who worked very well together, but eventually when there's nothing left, there's nothing left to share. Do you know what I mean? So we saw an influx in that as well. And the reason, I think, really, the families increased, and our singles decreased, but I think that's because there was a £20 top up... you know, there was a £20 uplift in Universal Credit. If you were on Universal Credit, you were getting £20 extra. For a single person, that's your gas and electricity. It's not to a family, so it doesn't have the same impact on families. [047 – Meg]

These industries play an important role in the economies of some rural areas (Getz 1994; Irvine and Anderson 2004; Currie and Falconer 2014). Economic analysis shows that these industries have been severely impacted by the lockdowns<sup>55</sup> and this is likely to have been felt particularly acutely in rural areas.

Lastly, it is notable that some respondents did not draw a strong qualitative distinction between the challenges faced by FWSAC before and during lockdown. Instead, they took the view that the lockdowns had exacerbated pre-existing problems:

I would say there was quite a lot of uncertainty from a number of different families, especially families who were already experiencing some of those issues, and obviously

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<sup>54</sup> See also Lisa and Anna in Appendix 3 section 3.

<sup>55</sup> See

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossdomesticproductgdp/articles/coronavirusandtheimpactonoutputintheconomy/june2020#services-industries> accessed on 17.1.22.

as we went into lockdown obviously children were at home, so certainly that became quite difficult for families that we had worked... that we had relationships with. So we knew that food poverty was already an existing problem, but that obviously exacerbated more. [040 – Bet]

The lockdown has highlighted really, and I think the hope that the government will recognise this going forward, that the current level of support they provide to families on a low income or on social security is entirely totally inadequate [010 – Daisy]<sup>56</sup>

Therefore, the main change during these times has been in the scale of the problem. The greater numbers of FWSAC requiring food aid turning what may have been previously regarded as personal problem into a pressing public issue (Wright-Mills 1959).

### 3.3 Type of organisation and ability to respond to needs during Covid-19 lockdowns

Interviewees were asked about the activities undertaken by their organisation. From their responses five loose types of organisation were identified based on services provided before lockdown. These were listed in column 4 in Table 2 and are summarised in Table 3, below.

**Table 3: Summary of main service(s) provided the organisations listed in Table 2**

<b>Organisation type</b>	<b>Services provided</b>	<b>Number listed in Table 2</b>
Foodbank	Primary focus is on providing emergency food parcels	17
Community Hub	Provides a range of services including food services such as cookery classes and community meals including access to food that services users can take home	9
Foodbank plus	Emergency food provisioning plus a range of services such as budgeting and benefits advice	7
Other	Provide specific food service, such as breakfast or hot lunch delivery, at a local or national level	3
Local Authority	Provide support services to those who may be vulnerable to food insecurity	2

Most organisations focused primarily on the provision of emergency food parcels and were labelled ‘foodbanks’. For example:

<sup>56</sup> See Mary in Appendix 3 in Section 8.1

Our thrust takes the form of weekly food deliveries to our clients. We're very clear that we focus on our core activity, which is food delivery. Now, from time to time, because we have support, we're part of organisations like FareShare and our local council and they do have information leaflets that they can send out.... And we'll include pamphlets in our deliveries, but as part of our core activity, we do not provide anything, other than the supply of food and toiletries. [011 – Harry]<sup>57</sup>

Nine organisations, which provided a wide range of support and food services to their surrounding area, were classified as 'community hubs'. For instance:

For the past 11 years believe it or not there has been a programme to build a community facility, which is your food hub, which was due to open soon with a café, farm shop, events based, consulting room and growing areas, again, the focus being on food and local food. There's a development kitchen that will allow people to train... it's basically for people that don't know how to cook, help them to cook with ingredients that they might have at home and quite simple equipment as well. The charity itself has community food workers and community gardeners. The community food workers' role has been go out into the community and again, teach people how to cook, and their focus has been working in the early years schooling and working with the parent or guardian and the child themselves... [013 – Isla]<sup>58</sup>

Seven organisations were labelled 'foodbank plus' as they combined a foodbank's provision of emergency food parcels with some of the functions of a community hub. For example:

In normal circumstances we run as a community café, a drop-in centre and a foodbank. The Green Shoots part of it is a garden, which again is a drop-in garden with allotments and with vegetable plot and things like that and it's an open space where people can go. And we grow vegetables there that are then brought from there down here and we use them to help provide meals and also help provide in food parcels. [001-Tanya]<sup>59</sup>

Two organisations were local authorities which provided support services to those who may be vulnerable to food insecurity:

So I work for the local authority. I deal mainly – my main role is I'm a policy and assurance officer for the welfare system and revenues that come into the council, the likes of council tax. And dabbling slightly in food insecurities prior to lockdown. [006 – Andrew]

The remaining three did not fit into the above categories so were labelled 'other'. This was largely due to the particular types of support they provided before the lockdown. For instance:

We have been running now for three years...we were set up to provide an outlet for loneliness, tackling loneliness and isolation. We're a rural area here we really want to try and do our very best to encourage participation in the older range from sixty-plus.

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<sup>57</sup> See also Edmund, and Neil in Appendix 3 section 4.1

<sup>58</sup> See also Anna and Gemma in section 3.1.1.3

<sup>59</sup> See also Stewart and Lois in Appendix 3 section 4.2

We set up primarily to run Christmas lunches, just for everyone to come out and also events that they can participate in during the year, and we ran that really successfully for a few years. [004 – Claire]<sup>60</sup>

The distinction between the first three types of organisation listed in Table 3 (foodbank, foodbank plus, community hub) was not rigid prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns. Almost all provided a combination of services, though at different levels:

We come under the umbrella of the Trussell Trust albeit effectively stand alone in a sense. There is certain protocols that we follow, which are already set by The Trussell Trust. Our main focus is supplying in a crisis need of food support. Hopefully there is – if we identify some other issue that’s they’re needing support with then we’ll signpost them in the general direction of an agency that would be able to support that. [042-Dick]<sup>61</sup>

Such distinctions appeared to become increasingly blurred after the start of the first lockdown. Organisations adapted, often very rapidly, the services they provided to meet the needs of their communities. For instance:

When we went into lockdown, we immediately went into emergency food production. Before, we were out doing lessons and we went from that to cooking... it was, at the time, 700 meals that were put in tubs, cooked fresh in here, frozen and put out, and that went to everybody really. [022 – Ruby]<sup>62</sup>

This resulted in almost all of these organisations becoming de facto foodbanks as they typically focused on emergency food provisioning, particularly during the early stages of the first lockdown. As restrictions persisted many participants explained that they started to provide a broader range of services alongside emergency food parcels – including utility top-up, IT provisions and support, and benefits and monetary advice – to meet an often steeply-increasing demand, some of which came from FWSAC to whom the organisation had not previously provided services:

So we found that we were doing electricity and gas top ups, we were doing food... going shopping for food parcels, just sending folk to food banks constantly but aware that they need more than just food bank stuff... we were doing Wi-Fi connections, telephones, mobile phones, all sorts of things that people were needing. [029 – Julie]

Yes, definitely families who had never had a referral before...there were a lot who had never had any referrals whatsoever. The demand was predominantly food, but there

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<sup>60</sup> See also Laura in Appendix 3 section 4.4.

<sup>61</sup> See also Liz in Appendix 3 section 4.1.

<sup>62</sup> See also Sally and Louise in Appendix 3 section 4.4.

were quite a few where people were needing things like crockery, cutlery and white goods. [045 – Luke]<sup>63</sup>

Participants said that the flexibility of their organisations allowed them to adapt their services and ways of working quickly in order to meet the needs of their communities that emerged during lockdown:

And we've kept very up to date with the current guidelines, and I think the ability to continually adapt what you're doing, it might have... because everything's changing quickly, as long as we keep up with the pace, everything that's changing, then we're fine. [022 – Ruby]

I think, obviously, the whole idea of the food bank is that we deal with crisis. The basis of it is when someone is needing support – you know, people need support there and then, there's no way about it when they're hungry. I think it kind of helped how we look at things and operate, we're always quick to react and we made sure that when someone needs support or needs food, we are there to support them and give them what they require. I think with the pandemic, although we didn't plan it at all, the way the system works, it's meant to be as easy for the client as possible and straightforward. We aren't trying to make it difficult for people to access support, and also we're not trying to make it difficult for volunteers or clients because I think it's already quite a flexible system and it's easy to work about it when the pandemic happened, there's not as many steps, it wasn't as difficult, we could easily make adjustments to it and rework it for the current time. [046 – Cat]

Adjustments included: moving to from the collection to the delivery of emergency food provisions<sup>64</sup>; buying food instead of relying on donations<sup>65</sup>; and providing supermarket vouchers<sup>66</sup>, online referrals<sup>67</sup>, and online advice, support and classes<sup>68</sup>. Some of these new and adapted services, such as free school meal replacements and activities, were specifically aimed at supporting FWSAC<sup>69</sup>. It must be noted that the transition to providing services online was not instantaneous, suggesting that, for a while, social and cultural needs of FWSAC may have gone unmet<sup>70</sup>. It would also seem that organisations in rural areas may have worked and adapted differently to those in urban areas<sup>71</sup>. This appears to be linked to the size of area covered and variations in the number of other organisations providing emergency food provisioning locally.

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<sup>63</sup> See also Mark in section 3.2.1, Des in section 3.1.2, Cat in Appendix 3 section 2, and Sarah and Dottie in Appendix 3 section 4.4.

<sup>64</sup> See Sally, Louise, Des in Appendix 3 section 4.5

<sup>65</sup> See Meg in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>66</sup> See Cindy in Appendix 3 section 4.5

<sup>67</sup> See May in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>68</sup> See Francis, Liz, Jana and Phyllis in Appendix 3 section 4.5

<sup>69</sup> See Lucy, Karen, Louise, Phyllis and Stewart in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>70</sup> See Frances in Appendix 3 in section 4.5.

<sup>71</sup> See Mary in section 3.2.2 and Andrew below.

Many participants reported that their organisations adapted so well that they were able to meet all the needs of their respective communities<sup>72</sup>. They noted that this was facilitated by: their organisational flexibility<sup>73</sup> (bureaucratic structures can inhibit or slow down the introduction of new practices and procedures (Briscoe 2007)); the flexibility, commitment, knowledge and experience of staff and volunteers<sup>74</sup>; the support and generosity of the community<sup>75</sup>; and close collaborations with partners<sup>76</sup>. Indeed, some participants felt that being forced to review and revise their operations allowed them to develop new and more effective methods of working:

I feel, personally feel it's been actually quite a, I shouldn't say, but a positive experience because we were forced to look at what we were doing very quickly and maybe provide an alternative to our service, we changed our hours of opening and things like that. We felt that we were... we ended up... things that have been on our agenda, plans that we've had and ideas that we've had for a while, ironically a lot of those things had to come to into fruition quite quickly because it ended up being there were things that would work best in the lockdown restrictions and restrictive way of working. So it forced us into doing things that we'd already been discussing, and we also felt that it forced a lot of the local community to do the same. So the council providing us with a phone number for example, we would have loved to have had that years ago but it would never have been on their agenda. So it forced people to look at food poverty and how to help reach people. So I suppose for us it's highlighted the demand for food, it's highlighted the cases of people that are living in poverty in crisis and shone a spotlight on all the things that we were already doing, but all the things that we already knew what was happening got ten times worse and then it became everybody's problems. So to us it's been a yeah, a positive experience and we feel that we think we've come out of this in a stronger position than we were before we went in, we kind of know ourselves better as well. [044 – May]

However, several participants explained that face-to-face services, community meals and drop-in support services were stopped, particularly at the beginning of the first lockdown. This led many participants to report that they could not meet all the needs of their respective communities:

I think again, just in the world of lockdown, just the sheer size of the authority, you can adapt to a lot of things, and you can put lots of things in place. But when you shut down – I suppose it maybe goes back to face to face, you know? But no outreach, you can't go into local communities, you're having to do everything remotely for them. That does then give people, I guess, a sense of isolation. You know, given the size of our local authority area...and all the other things that I could quote about it, it's still more beneficial to be able to travel about. [006 – Andrew]<sup>77</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> See David and Karen in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>73</sup> See Ruby, and Cat above.

<sup>74</sup> See Mike and Linda in Appendix 3 in sections 4.5..

<sup>75</sup> See David in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>76</sup> See Bet in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

<sup>77</sup> See Anna and Mary in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

Additionally, participants reported that they felt there were a number of hard to reach families whose needs they could not meet and that the social needs of service users could not be attended to in the usual way:

There were needs out there that we weren't able to adapt and meet. In some ways, yeah. As you can imagine, food banks deal with folk with mental health and addiction issues and it broke our heart because we lost three of ours who'd overdosed or committed suicide. As a priest, it's very worth recording that I've done three Covid funerals since lockdown and they've all been over eighty. I've done six overdoses or suicides and they've all been under thirty, and these are folk that you put a lot of personal effort in to. You want them to thrive and all their support agencies just disappeared. [016 – Tom]

The way that we've worked we've had to apply the regulations. So albeit we're trying to address and engage with service users. We've been really restricted with how we can do that. And the time that we can spend with them. And for a lot of folk, it is literally selected food in the one way system with priority not much engagement at all and straight out the door. So that has been probably the most challenging thing that – especially the staff have found, like I've certainly found that as well. [041 – Carrie]

Nonetheless, the flexibility of these organisations<sup>78</sup>, along with the adaptability, experience and attitude of those who work and volunteer for them<sup>79</sup>, helped them to respond quickly<sup>80</sup> to the changing needs of their communities. This suggests, in turn, that their flexible staff and organisational structure enabled third sector organisations to respond quickly to the rapidly-developing needs of vulnerable FWSAC. However, not all organisations were able to adapt as quickly and effectively as they would have liked. Thus, the following section explores the perceived impact that lockdowns had on the organisations themselves.

### 3.4 The perceived impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns on organisations and the services they provide

Participants were asked to reflect on the impact that working through the Covid-19 lockdowns had on their organisation, staff and volunteers. Several explained that their organisation changed significantly during the lockdowns: some staff had to be furloughed; others had to work remotely; and some volunteers had to either self-isolate or could not be accommodated

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<sup>78</sup> See Julie and Luke above.

<sup>79</sup> See Ruby and Cat above.

<sup>80</sup> See Mike and Linda in Appendix 3 section 4.5



due to physical distancing requirements. Participants reported concerns about the impact of isolation on the mental health of staff and volunteers who had to stay at home:

Yeah I mean for me obviously I came back from my maternity leave early December so I feel like I'm maybe going through what a lot of the rest of the team have kind of already been through but for me it's, I think it's working remotely disconnected from the rest of the team is quite isolating in this line of work, you're getting messages about people's needs. It's very hard to kind of maintain healthy boundaries I guess and not get quite overwhelmed by that, whereas if you were kind of working together as a team in the same space, there was a kind of sense of it not just resting on your own shoulders, so yeah there's definitely that. [020 – Jana]<sup>81</sup>

On the other hand, interviewees noted that staff and volunteers who worked through the lockdowns were often coping with immense workloads and pressures, which also impacted on their mental and physical health:

I know that those of us that have worked right through, the three of us, we are utterly, utterly exhausted, and I know I've, not just with tiredness and all that, I've struggled a little bit with mental health, but I just make sure I'm getting my time off, I make sure I switch off at 4.30. I think at the start of everything that was something we were struggling with just because everything, it was so massive, and I think I lived on adrenaline probably for the first three months of Covid. I didn't have a breakdown but I needed to take my fortnight holiday and I enjoyed it. But there's definitely an impact on mental health in the staff and the volunteers. [027 – Mark]<sup>82</sup>

Others indicated that the lockdowns had some positive impacts on staff and volunteers through a sense of achievement and satisfaction derived from supporting those in need:

I think, think they were quite satisfied. During lockdown just to volunteer, and it's an immediate good feeling as when you're going to somebody and delivering a parcel you instantly see the effect that you're having on somebody and so I think it has helped a lot of them that way. [022 – Ruby]<sup>83</sup>

The sense of satisfaction in helping others is consistent with findings from other studies<sup>84</sup>.

Participants also spoke of the impact the lockdowns had on organisational finances. One, a social enterprise, suffered financial losses due to services and outlets being closed as a result of Covid-19 restrictions:

We had to close everything else, so we've not been able to generate any income, apart from when we were briefly unlocked last year... my accounts manager and I were doing

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<sup>81</sup> See also Judy and Maria in Appendix 3 section 6.1.

<sup>82</sup> See also Cat and Lucy in Appendix 3 section 6.1.

<sup>83</sup> See also David and Lois in Appendix 3 section 6.1.

<sup>84</sup> E.g. Brown *et al.* 2012; Kulik 2018; McKenzie and Watts 2020; Watts and McKenzie 2021a, 2021b.

a calculation on this. In the last year... last year we lost over £200,000 of income from the lockdown. [023 – Judy]<sup>85</sup>

More often, however, participants explained that the lockdowns had a positive impact on their organisation's financial resources, through private donations and funding from public authorities:

We had a huge increase in donations, huge. We had people put in money to some of the wholesalers and saying, "Just keep purchasing until it's done". So we had some really generous donations, and the fact that people couldn't get out and do the shopping didn't reduce what was being donated to us. [035 – Helga]

We didn't apply [*to the authorities*] for anything and we didn't need to apply for anything because we had enough money. Without looking for it our funding went up exponentially. We got offered £20,000 from the local authority just as the lockdown was hitting because that's when we always got £20,000, the April every year, and we actually asked them to put it back into their own account... channel it into other groups that were needing the help. So we refused the funding help that we were offered from the council. [044 – May]<sup>86</sup>

Looking forwards, some participants expressed concern that the aftermath of the lockdowns will result in continuing high demand for their organisation's services:

Yes. I think longer term we are going to be inundated with folk who – I think there is a lot of businesses that don't know the impact on themselves let alone the staff who at the moment are being subsidised by referral systems. So I think when the furlough schemes is phased out we'll have a lot of other clients engaging. I think a lot of people will accumulate debt over the period as well. And I also think in terms of the kind of clients we're going to have coming in although I don't like labelling people they're not going to be – I think we're going to have a lot of folk engaging who were previously working. And had a shift cut down or whatever and especially we've seen that with a lot of self-employed people who the government schemes have just missed. And the hospitality industry as well. [041 – Carrie]<sup>87</sup>

Concerns were also expressed about funding and support from public authorities and the community drying-up when the emergency had passed:

The financial donations that came in have been staggering, seriously... We've been fortunate. Quite a few food pantries have opened, and we've tried to help as much as we can with those. Our concern is that when things start to get back to normal, possibly these pantries won't be able to continue and that might be an impact on the food bank. [045 – Luke]<sup>88</sup>

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<sup>85</sup> See also Stewart in Appendix 3 section 6.2

<sup>86</sup> See also Edmund and Harry in section 3.5 and Tom, Dottie, Cindy, Lucy and Gemma in Appendix 3 section 6.2

<sup>87</sup> See also Julie in Appendix 3 section 6.2..

<sup>88</sup> See also Stewart and Lisa in Appendix 3 in section 6.3.

Such concerns are well founded. There is evidence that people and organisations are more likely to help others in their communities at times of emergency (Yuill 2004; Sivers *et al.* 2014). This suggests that, once the emergency has passed, such help will diminish. A similar pattern can be discerned in welfare support. In March 2020 the UK Government introduced a temporary £20 uplift to Universal Credit and working tax credits, which has now ceased (Winchester 2021).

Participants also reported on barriers that prevented them from adapting to and meeting all the needs of their communities, including: a lack of suitable premises; their location in their 'local' area; the closing of essential support services; the absence of face-to-face interaction with clients; a lack of financial and other support; and a lack of IT provisions in the community. For example:

I think what didn't work well is the fact that... it's difficult to know if it hasn't worked well because I haven't actually got any evidence for this, which is dreadful so you probably won't even want to include this, but that sense of we know that there are families out there that aren't accessing us for food and we know that there are people who need help... and we know that they would be really... like when we do provide food for people the feedback we get is, "I can't believe what you've provided for us", because it is, it's really good. [002 – Phyllis]

Oh, God, it's terrible... we had to adapt very, very quickly, more so than anybody because we had to move out of... our previous offices where we worked was an ex-cottage hospital, so we cleaned up very quickly so we could actually move and got all our stuff into storage and also adapt with other things that were going on at the same time to support our own beneficiaries at the exact same time... [012 – Sally]

This section suggests that the organisations in this study had the flexibility and resilience to respond to the needs of their communities during the lockdowns. However, participants reported adverse effects, barriers to adaptation and concern for the future, especially the fragility of organisations that rely on external funding and charitable donations. Thus, the next section discusses participants' views on the support provided to their organisation during the lockdowns.

### 3.5 Support from partner organisations, the community and public authorities

Many participants said that they received help from partner organisations:

We recruited at the time 15 different partners...working throughout the Covid with response groups the community council, the local authority and individuals. [013 – Isla]<sup>89</sup>

Interviewees explained that they worked with these partners more closely than they had previously, which aided communication and helped the organisations to meet the needs of their clients:

We're trying to keep good relationships with as many people as possible, to be quite honest. I would have said possibly a bit more distanced given that everything's done by telephone now. In fact, can I change that? Actually, we have probably become closer with a lot of different groups, and I certainly have been working a lot closer with different groups, funnily enough because of the Zoom, because we are now part of a partnership...we do quite a few meetings with them. Because of that, we have probably worked closer with people when I think about, but not necessarily people who are supplying us with food, but sometimes just other people who are doing either the same, or similar tasks to what we do, or they may be doing tasks or work that we can feed into and that we can send our clients to them. [047 –Meg]<sup>90</sup>

Several respondents reported receiving significant financial support from the community and for some this meant that they did not require anything further from national or local government funds. This support came in the form of financial donations from individual members of the community, businesses and other organisations:

A third source of funding comes from what we call corporate, we get money from charitable groups. There was one that came in for five hundred quid, and we get money from football clubs, a rugby club who have a collection for us... We've had something from a trade union, good funding on two occasions [005 – Edmund]

The big difference we noticed, and we really have noticed, is in the donations that we receive from local organisations. Now, I'm going to be repeating myself, but it's an actual fact that from everyone, from the lady who rocks up with a £10 note in an envelope and giving it to us, we've had so much additional support from local schools, local clubs, local organisations, local businesses. It really has been fantastic, both by way of cash, but also by way of goods. [011 – Harry]<sup>91</sup>

In addition to community support, many participants reported that they received abundant funding and other forms of support from the public sector.

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<sup>89</sup> See also Karen and Laura in Appendix 3 section 7.1

<sup>90</sup> See also Glenda and Helga in Appendix 3 section 7.1.

<sup>91</sup> See also May and Judy in Appendix 3 section 7.2

It came from the government, a lot of it. And through various places, so voluntary organisations could apply for government money as well, for different parts of their... dealing with the pandemic. So if they needed more gadgets or they needed more stuff, they were able to apply for money. But councils got a chunk of money I would say every term, really. There's just been more money coming in. We got funds for our mental health services, we got money for food services, and we got money for dealing with expanding some of the services out there that are dealing with people on benefits. You know, they would get more money to employ more people or for fuel payments, especially during the winter time. It was geared more towards those kinds of things. There is still money coming in, but at some point that is going to dry up. [026 – Lucy]<sup>92</sup>

This indicates that some third sector organisations providing emergency foods and other supports to FWSAC benefitted from the additional funds and supports put in place by the authorities during the lockdowns (Scottish Government 2022b). Furthermore, participants also reported that funding application procedures were much easier and less time consuming during the lockdowns:

I think the forms were simpler. So that was due to time and processing them. But certainly, in the past I've done a lot of application forms which are quite complicated. So yeah, I don't know if they're deliberately made them a little bit simpler. [018 – Cathy]<sup>93</sup>

A number of participants praised the support they received from local authorities and other organisations:

I don't really think so. I mean, even people like [*name of large corporate employer*] the people who were on furlough were told by their managers – or if they were on reduced work – to keep their vans and the [*company's*] people came and delivered food during the first section of the lockdown, which was really good. For a couple of months we were struggling for drivers and those guys were doing it. That just happened, they approached the food bank and said, "Do you want us to help?" and of course because they had their vans, they were able to shift stuff. [045 – Luke]

As I say we've been really kind of lucky with the way our council just took it on-board and the way they kind of responded. We've received wellbeing packs from them as well and packs for kids. So they really have been going above and beyond. I know that's not been – I've spoken to other foodbanks in different areas, and I know that's not been the experience of everybody. But I really can't fault our council at all. They've been a great support. [018 – Cathy]

However, there were those who felt that their organisation was slow to get involved with collaborations and as a result that they were slower to respond to and meet needs within their community:

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<sup>92</sup> See also Cindy and Gemma in Appendix 3 section 6.2 and May in Appendix 3 section 7.3.

<sup>93</sup> See also Mark in Appendix 3 section 7.3

Probably the partnership part of it. I think we isolated ourselves, unintentionally, but a year later you can now see groups of organisations that are very tight knit and are working together really well and we're sitting on the outside of that because they've worked together for a year now, still sharing resources, sharing staff, sharing volunteers and we're sitting separate and we're finding now that things are a little bit more normal that there's some barriers in place that although that... although we've been offering a food bank service in a particular area for the last eight years, people are kind of looking at us as outsiders as an organisation. We're not new, we're not... we've been there for eight years, but organisations, very much local organisations did come together and I think because as much as we're local in the sense of Edinburgh we cover lots of different local areas of Edinburgh, and the local organisations have come together and aren't seeing us as local support and I don't think that's anything on them, that's not, but I think it is because we didn't... we very much worked in isolation at the beginning.

Some also felt that collaborations could have been more effectively facilitated by the authorities<sup>94</sup>. Whilst others explained that they lacked volunteers during the lockdowns and very much needed funding and other forms of support from the authorities:

Blooming right they should have given us more funding because if it wasn't for us they would have to pay for the food themselves or else deal with destitute families. So we're saving them so much money and so much grief and so much manpower. Yeah, no, we don't get a bean. Well that's not true, we got money for a computer, which was £800 or something, and financially that's it. I mean I suppose the Council... yeah, no, they haven't given us anything. I think that there should've been a fund, a national fund that food banks could have accessed without having to go through all the form filling and tedious long, months long application process that we had to go through for the Coronavirus recovery grant, which is what we got through the Enterprise people. That money took a long time to come through and... because the process was so wieldy and we're responding to people's direct needs and a lot of the time people come to us and they're running on fumes by the time they get to us so we need to respond instantly. We can't wait for... a two month wait to see whether you've been successful on a grant or not is not ideal when you're dealing with immediate need. [032 – Karen]<sup>95</sup>

Two participants took the view that public funding was not distributed efficiently:

I think the pop-up organisations that appeared hasn't worked great mainly because they're not doing a referral basis or anything, they're just allowing people to walk in, Yes, when the first lockdown come on we had loads of pop ups, food providers... So if they just let us do our job.... but I think because of the amount of funding that was there. I think that's why there was so many pop up places because they were seeing that there's money available and they were just jumping on the bandwagon, even although they didn't know anything about distributing food or where to distribute it or how to distribute it or how to store it, they were just jumping on the wagon. [037 – Lois]<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> See Anna and Des in Appendix 3 in section 7.4.

<sup>95</sup> See also Andrew and Julie in Appendix 3 in section 7.4.

<sup>96</sup> See also Lucy in Appendix 3 in section 7.4.

Others felt that there could have been more communication and collaboration between public authorities and longstanding emergency food providers:

The facilitation of collaboration is key for the future. I think everybody needs to speak to each other more and even on a ground level, at Christmas it was amazing the amount of food and toys, and clothes and things that had been made available to people through, be it, donations or funds but yeah, I think that definitely has to happen. The organisations and agencies need to speak to each other more, a more joined up approach. [015 – Glenda]

I think more interaction with the people who are already on the front line. To find out really where are the needs and how would – what are you trying to achieve by giving out the funding? What’s the aim and how could that best be met? [041 – Carrie]<sup>97</sup>

One participant suggested that better information sharing could be achieved by creating a database containing details of organisations involved with food provisioning and other support services throughout Scotland:

I think if there was a database or a free charity in your area because for us you can look up stuff, but it doesn’t take in everything as well as community activists that you can tap into, so if there was a database that anybody could access that covers everything from your housing support to where and how you can access the foodbank, that would be really beneficial for the public and the charities. [022 – Ruby]

There were also those who felt some services that had been shut down should have been defined as essential and maintained during the Covid 19 lockdowns:

Just the fact that so many of our agencies closed their doors and just became so difficult to reach for us but also mainly for the clients, I just felt so sorry for people who... I mean I talk about this a lot when I talk about what we do, the people that are marginalised and live on a bit of a knife edge and keep their heads above water, all these phrases, but they were hardest hit and it just tipped folk over the edge. So the folk that are already struggling to maybe access services don’t have money to phone people, or don’t have mobile phones or computers, all those folk it just became another layer of difficulty for them to get not just food help but other support. I just felt they were just hung out to dry and I was actually quite disappointed, as much as the council did a lot of things, they still have never really returned a lot of their services to being face to face where we’ve never stopped facing people at our door and speaking to people and trying to help people, the council and a lot of the other government agencies like the Job Centre and some statutory agencies have become so difficult to reach, that has been really awful I think and that’s hard to help, we can’t do an awful lot about that. [044 – May]<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> See also Tanya in Appendix 3 section 7.4.

<sup>98</sup> See also Jana and Mary in Appendix 3 section 4.5.

Lastly, some respondents felt that public funding could have been more timely and that local authorities could have provided other types of support, including better school meal replacement parcels:

The Council provided funding and children were given bags of groceries on a Monday and the groceries for every week during lockdown were the same to my mind – rubbish – it was a loaf of white bread, baked beans, cheese. So if you have three children on free school meals that family got three bags of this. Really, really ordinary food. One day for a picnic, yes. But not every day for the whole of lockdown. And I complained about that and was told that the nutritionist looked at it and thought it was adequate and that broke my heart. I thought that was terrible. [028 – Linda]<sup>99</sup>

This indicates that, whilst the extra support put in place by the Scottish Government (2022b) has been well received by some participants, others have felt unsupported or that the authorities could have been more generous and effective with their supports.

Overall, however, respondents viewed the support provided by collaborators, the community and the local authorities as vital in helping them to meet the needs of FWSAC during the Covid-19 lockdowns. Three points were emphasised repeatedly: securing support from the community<sup>100</sup>; opening and maintaining communication and collaboration between third sector organisations; and encouraging collaboration between local authorities and frontline third-sector organisations<sup>101</sup>. Participants also saw a prominent role for local authorities in: promoting collaboration and communication<sup>102</sup> between front line organisations; providing additional and accessible funding for third sector food aid organisations; and monitoring the efficient distribution of this financial support. In addition, some participants felt that public funding should be targeted towards organisations with greater experience in providing emergency food aid and that measures should be taken to ensure that service provision is not duplicated, as there was a perception that in some areas provision during lockdown exceeded demand<sup>103</sup>. This indicates that the Scottish Government's (2022a) plan to work in close collaboration with frontline third sector organisations may prove an effective strategy for working towards a right to food for all in Scotland.

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<sup>99</sup> See also Liz in Appendix 3 section 7.4.

<sup>100</sup> See Edmund and Harry in section 4.4 and Appendix 3 section 7.2.

<sup>101</sup> See Glenda and Carrie above and Tanya in Appendix 3 section 7.4.

<sup>102</sup> See Glenda and Carrie above.

<sup>103</sup> See Karen and Lois above and Andrew in Appendix 3 section 7



### 3.6 Support required to keep FWSAC out of food insecurity should there be a future lockdown and during school holidays outside of lockdown

Participants felt that the UK and Scottish governments could support FWSAC more effectively in a number of ways should there be a future lockdown. Many felt that this could be achieved most readily through enhanced welfare payments:

I certainly would like to see the increase in universal credit, the £20 a week increase maintained because the level of £73 a week is not manageable at any time let alone now. I'd like to see Westminster manage that better. There's also been the loopholes though where people who were still on old style job seeker's allowance and on the old style employment and support allowance who had not transitioned on to universal credit were not eligible for this extra £20 a week, so they've still been stuck on the £73 a week, so not everyone was getting the help on the across the board basis, so that needs to be addressed. I mean there are so many things about the UK social security system that needs to be addressed and you just don't know where to start with it [010 – Daisy]<sup>104</sup>

Participants pointed to a range of support services that would help families remain food secure when children are not in school, for example in school holidays or if there were to be a further lockdown:

I think there's lessons around child care availability and what that looks like. We certainly know that women and particularly women with children have been one of the most affected groups in terms of the lockdown and employability as well as just caring responsibilities. I think when we then think to how we change from school term to holiday time and the lack of child care provision that's generally available unless you can pay quite well for it, I think that's something that really needs looked at in terms of reducing those pressures and just making... being able to think about different kinds of employment when you're not having to worry about what you're doing with the kids for seven weeks of the school summer holidays and the wraparound bit. I hope it's shone a light on that in terms of just that impact and around employability certainly. [043 – Louise]<sup>105</sup>

Others felt that there needs to be more fundamental change to the welfare system:

I think it's quite obvious that the welfare state doesn't work and I'm a big supporter of changing that, and I'm a big supporter of making it effective and making it fair, and making families able to pull themselves out of the poverty cycle. So, I definitely think that that's something needs to be improved on and worked upon because we're still working with the same welfare state that was conjured up just after the war and I think that after so many years, you've got to adapt and change, just like any place would. [019 – Dottie]

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<sup>104</sup> See Isla, Sally, Mary in Appendix 3 in section 8.1

<sup>105</sup> See Jana and Mike in Appendix 3 section 8.2.

At the local level, participants pointed to a number of supports that FWSAC require during periods, whether school holidays or lockdowns, when children are not in school:

Something that they need to look at that families with low income and under school age, particularly primary school children, just because they go on holiday doesn't mean that suddenly there's money coming into the house. It just doesn't appear for the six weeks for the summer holidays. They still have as little money for those six weeks, as they had for every other week of the year, so I do think that they do need to look at a long-term solution for people. But not necessarily a free school meal service, in as much as meals are actually cooked from the school and put out to the houses. I don't think that helps, and especially not in this here rural area, because it's either cold or it's dried up, or it's whatever, when it gets there. I think they do look at some kind of vouchering system or something, but they definitely need to look at families needing food help over the holiday time long-term [001 – Tanya]<sup>106</sup>

Other participants took the view that local authorities should continue free meal provision when children are not in school:

I do think school meals should be provided throughout the year by the council... I think school meals or breakfast clubs, lunch clubs, something around food definitely over any period that the school's closed, not just summer, because things don't change, if anything they're slightly worse because the kids are off school and in every cupboard... and wanting to be everywhere. No, I think definitely that's what should be provided through the council whenever the schools are off in some sort of capacity. [039 – Liz]<sup>107</sup>

In addition, some participants suggested that local authorities should provide greater help in identifying families in need:

See I think it's very much dependent on the school that the family goes to, because some schools are very good at providing activity packs and workbooks and things like that and other schools just weren't. So I don't know if that comes down to the actual individual teacher or the head teacher or I'm not sure what happens there, but I think making sure that all the kids have the same resources. So I know there's been different funds, we sent somebody to a local fund that got a laptop, their family got a laptop. [037 – Lois]

Participants also felt that the authorities would need to better facilitate collaboration and dissemination of information to the public if there were another lockdown:

Yes, probably, they would need to communicate with the public better. Sometimes the statutory bodies take rather a long time to come up with actually sharing information, not because they want to hold it to themselves, it's just because the cogs take so long to turn to actually get that information out that sometimes everything's over and done with before it even begins. [001 –Tanya]<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> See Karen, Laura and Daisy in Appendix 3 section 8.2.

<sup>107</sup> See Mike and Ruby in Appendix 3 section 8.2.

<sup>108</sup> See also Glenda and Carrie in section 3.5 and Tanya in Appendix 3 section 7.4.

The timely provision of information raises questions about how it can be provided. Some participants noted that digital divides<sup>109</sup> would need to be addressed if FWSAC are to be kept out of food insecurity should there be a lockdown again in future:

You'd like to think that we'd have learned from all of this and every family would have the ability to be online and to access everything and hopefully there probably shouldn't be a need for community larders or food banks. People should be able to access that. [015 – Glenda]<sup>110</sup>

In this context, it is notable that that digital inequalities may have been intensified during the Covid-19 pandemic (Beunoyer *et al.* 2020; Vinkers *et al.* 2020).

Although online connectivity is important, some respondents felt that a broader range of in-person services would need to be maintained, and that there would need to be greater communication between local authorities and third sector organisations, were there to be another lockdown. For example:

Two of our service users who we absolutely adore have died, one in December and one two weeks ago, and they have suffered in the past with substance misuse but who have got so many underlying health conditions and we just worry that obviously with them being stuck at home and it really is a sense of... well one of us might just burst into tears about now, we just haven't seen them as much as we normally would, and because they were... one of them was in the shielding group, he wasn't able to get out as much as he could. Now my colleague been amazing, she's been going to his house, dropping off his laundry, bringing around food when she can and one of his friends has looked out for him. But that level of social contact they'd normally get by just coming in for a coffee and sitting chatting with friends or to us for a while is a need that... to me that's one of the most important things we do, the kettle is our most important piece of equipment because that's how you get folk in and you get to sit down and have a chat, that's how you find out how folk are and you find out their need, and I feel that lockdown and the restrictions on the opening has meant we're not having that informality where you actually really find out what need it is that needs met at that moment such as a food parcel of their electric's gone off. It's the informal chats you have with people where you actually can draw out underlying issues and you think, "Okay, right, well we can help with that, we can maybe have you apply for this, we can help you get this funding". We've lost that ability during lockdown which has been really, really hard for us and hard for our service users... I know it was very much stay at home and I know there was some facility for the children of key workers, but for some kids in chaotic households and some parents who may have health issues themselves it's just not an ideal learning environment. So even if it's just very few children, three or four children who really need it, why couldn't they have worked with groups like ourselves and actually utilised that facility? There's stuff that I think could've been done differently in a safe environment, ... We have masks, we've got all

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<sup>109</sup> On the digital divides, see Cullen 2001; Estacio *et al.* 2019; Neves and Mead 2020.

<sup>110</sup> See also Judy, Cathy and Daisy in Appendix 3 section 8.1.

the PPE in place so because we're a small group we don't have a lot of people through the door so we could quite safely have maybe provided that kind of service for people. We had adults in providing one on one support with benefits and appointments but why couldn't we have done it with children... Well I think the local authorities are really going to have to come out of this and look at the level of services provided by the on the ground organisations such as ourselves. [010 – Daisy]

## 4. Findings and recommendations

This section presents the main findings from the study and draws out some tentative recommendations. Its size and qualitative nature preclude the drawing of definite conclusions.

This study confirms that FWSAC are perceived to represent a minority of those in need of food aid. However, where they do require support, respondents indicated that services need to be adapted for them and that school holidays are a time when they may be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity and may require additional services to remain food secure. This study also found that there was a perceived increase in demand for food aid and other support services during the lockdowns and that some families, particularly those dependent on welfare benefits and working families who experience a fluctuation in income and/or expenditure, may be particularly vulnerable to food insecurity. It would also appear that, for FWSAC with mortgages and unsecured debts, a reduction in income – e.g. from being made redundant or being placed on furlough – can render them particularly vulnerable to food insecurity as they may lack knowledge of how to negotiate the welfare system and their benefit entitlements may not cover the cost of servicing their debts. These factors suggest that there is a perceived need for additional services and supports for FWSAC during school holidays and should there be a lockdown again in future. Thus, it would appear that the Scottish Government is right to put extra provisions in place at such times (Boettger 2017; Scottish Government 2019; Scottish Government 2022b).

However, given participants' arguments that school holidays and lockdowns bring pre-existing problems, such as insufficient benefits and fluctuations in income and expenditure in working families, to the forefront, it seems likely that such support mechanisms and strategies may be required at all times if all FWSAC are going to be kept out of food insecurity. That would allow organisations to respond to needs at the individual household level (personal problems) where food insecurity could occur at any time, and to be ready for increases in demand (public issues) during school holidays and should there be societal crises, such as further lockdowns or rising unemployment, in future. Therefore, rather than identifying best practices and making recommendations for support that should be put in place during school holidays and any future lockdowns, it would seem sensible to develop and maintain services that frontline organisations could deliver on an ongoing basis. The Scottish Government's (2022a) proposed Minimum

Income Guarantee and Universal Income Guarantee appear to be significant moves in this direction.

Regarding the provision of food aid, respondents highlighted best practices in relation to the services and supports that frontline organisations provide and the ways in which they operate. These include: emergency food deliveries where needed; buying food instead of relying on donations; close collaborations with other organisations, such as local authorities, schools and businesses; a move towards online referrals; maintaining a combination of face-to-face and online services; and retaining some level of homeworking for staff. The qualitative evidence gathered by this study suggests the utility of a ‘three capitals’ approach: providing people, including FWSAC, with access to the economic, social and embodied cultural capitals that enable them to become and remain food secure. This emerged from the emphasis that respondents place on providing financial, social and cultural supports, including: utility top-ups; IT support; classes; and benefits and debt management advice. The importance of social support should not be underestimated here: social isolation was perceived by some respondents to have had fatal consequences during lockdown. Where organisations cannot provide these supports they should be enabled to signpost service users towards those that can.

Given that there are FWSAC who are thought to be vulnerable to food insecurity outside of the particular conditions of the lockdowns, this study indicates that there may be a need to maintain the provision of emergency food aid. However, it is likely that this could be provided in a more dignified manner than through emergency food parcels, for example by providing direct payments or food vouchers. The Scottish Government’s (2022a) intention to adopt a collaborative cash-first approach and to pilot the use of shopping vouchers in place of foodbank referrals would appear to be a useful move in this direction. However, if food vouchers are identifiable as coming from a welfare provider they could still carry a certain amount of social stigma for those obliged to use them. Moreover, any approach that ignores the other two capitals identified as important by respondents – i.e. social and embodied cultural capital – is likely to be only partially successful.

Nonetheless, it is clear that respondents perceived a requirement for enhanced support for FWSAC from UK, Scottish and local government bodies. One of the chief obstacles to maintaining food security was considered to be insufficient welfare support for economically vulnerable families, a group which was considered to include many where at least one member

was in paid employment. Many aspects of social welfare policy are reserved to the UK Government. However, respondents pointed to a number of initiatives that could be implemented by the Scottish Government and local authorities to reduce household expenditure and enhance access to the economic, social and embodied cultural capitals that would enable FWSAC to become and remain food secure. These could include funding third sector organisations which could provide access to utility top-ups (electricity, gas and mobile phone) and classes (e.g. on food preparation, budgeting, debt management and the benefits system). It was also argued that the Scottish Government and local authorities could provide easier access to sufficient levels of ongoing funding for frontline third sector providers. However, we would caution that such an approach would require careful monitoring to ensure the proper and efficient use of public funds.

Respondents made suggestions for actions by local authorities. It was suggested that they could provide ongoing support for emergency food parcel deliveries. Some respondents suggested that local authorities should set up a helpline which people could contact should they become vulnerable to food insecurity. Such a helpline could provide advice and signpost people towards relevant experts and support services. Furthermore, it was proposed that local authorities should aim to ensure that everyone in their area has access to IT devices, the internet and technical support. Local authorities, in collaboration with third sector organisations, could also try to identify and maintain key social services and allow third sector organisations, which have the capacity to work safely, to maintain essential face-to-face services during lockdowns.

Respondents also suggested that it would be useful if local authorities promoted communication and collaboration with and between third sector organisations, businesses and schools. This could enhance frontline organisations' ability to identify families in need and either provide them with the services they require or signpost them towards organisations that can do so. To this end it might be useful to provide all staff and volunteers with access to an updated online database of the organisations involved with addressing food insecurity in their area<sup>111</sup>. Relatedly, it was also considered that local authorities could promote regular inter-organisation meetings to discuss experiences and to continue to explore means of effective collaboration and communication.

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<sup>111</sup> A project stakeholder has informed us that a number of local authority and/or third sector organisations have begun to provide maps or lists of local community food providers on their websites.

However, before recommending particular courses of action, the limitations inherent to this project must be addressed. This could happen in three ways. First, people working in this area should be brought together, perhaps in regional focus groups, to reflect on the findings of this research and, drawing on their experiences and expertise, to develop and prioritise possible policy mechanisms. Secondly, given the small number of local authority representatives recruited for this study, work needs to be conducted with a broader range of local authorities to explore their work with FWSAC during the lockdowns and gain a better understanding of the constraints under which they operate. Thirdly, future research should record the first-hand experiences of FWSAC who were exposed to food insecurity during the lockdowns, whether or not they had recourse to emergency food supplies. Such work, by identifying the support needs and coping strategies developed by FWSAC, would add the voices of service users to those of local authority and other frontline organisations and ensure that they are actively involved in the development of policies that seek to eliminate food insecurity in ways consistent with the Scottish Government's (2016) dignity principles.

The fluidity of third sector organisations, the different responses of local authorities, and the potential for spatial differences (e.g. between rural and urban areas) articulated by respondents argue against a 'one size fits all' approach to the development of policy mechanisms which could inform frontline organisations' responses to food insecurity among FWSAC. While there are likely to be commonalities, this research indicates that any policy mechanisms developed should be adaptable to local circumstances. By the same token, local adaptations should be shared widely once developed and be fed into further policy review and development.

Finally, this study has emphasised the perceived fragility of third sector organisations in providing services and food to vulnerable FWSAC: they rely on short-term public funding, donations and the good will of the public. Putting such services on a financially sustainable footing merits urgent consideration. One option may be for the Scottish Government to institutionalise, insofar as its devolved competence allows, aspects of models used by third sector organisations, such as those which took part in this study and as developed through further reflection as recommended above, to provide public sector support that would enable all Scotland's residents to become and to remain food secure. However, given the distrust of the authorities and the welfare state by some food insecure FWSAC, as reported by this study's participants, there may be reluctance among the most vulnerable to use services provided



directly by the Scottish Government. This, when coupled with the flexibility and adaptability of the third sector, suggests that its displacement from the provision of support – whether in the form of economic, social or embodied cultural capital – for FWSAC and others at risk of food insecurity should be planned holistically and undertaken cautiously.

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## Appendix 1 Interview schedule

### RD 3.3.2 Food Security

#### Interview schedule for Holiday provision for families with children: learning from Scotland's COVID-19 'lockdowns' (O8)

##### Introductory

1. Explain that this interview will help build a fuller understanding of how organisations like yours coped with food insecurity among families with school age children during COVID-19 'lockdowns'.
2. Check that respondent is happy for recording to commence
3. If so, start the recording and obtain informed consent:
  - I. Ask for approval for, and answer any questions arising from, each item on the consent form;
  - II. Check that the respondent is happy for the interview to go ahead.

##### Interview topics

- Prompts are bulleted underneath the questions

Please tell us about your organisation and your within it

Please tell us about your organisation and what it provided for families with school age children during the school holidays before the lockdown period?

- Food in general, specific types of food
- Activities for children and carers
- Other goods and services
- Particular to families with school age children
- Similar to the needs of others?
- Differences between school holiday periods and other times of the year

Please tell us about the needs of families with school-age children which arose during lockdown.

- Food in general, specific types of food
- Other needs, e.g. for goods and services
- Similar to needs outside of lockdown?
- Difference from needs outside of lockdown
- Particular to families with school-age children
- Similar to the needs of others?

Please tell us about how your organisation met the needs of families with school-age children which arose during lockdown?

- Food in general, specific types of food

- Food parcels, supplies of cooked food/meals, drop-ins, deliveries, other methods
- Other needs, e.g. for goods and services
- Different ways your organisation worked to meet these needs during lockdown
- familiar ways your organisation worked to meet these needs during lockdown
- Factors that allowed you to adapt and meet the needs during locked down
- Formal procedures
- Informal practices
- Differences between the two lockdowns

Please tell us about needs of families with school-age children which emerged during lockdown that your organisation was unable to meet

- Which 'unmet' needs arose?
- Were they related to food or to other goods and services? Which one(s)
- Were people directed elsewhere?
- Hard to reach families? Why were they hard to reach
- Factors that limited your ability to adapt and meet the needs during locked down
- Differences between the two lockdowns
- 

Please tell us about the impact on your organisation of lockdown

- Impact on staff and volunteers (e.g. illness, stress, tiredness etc.)
- Impact on capacity – e.g. did you run out of food, resources, etc.?
- Implications for the survival of your organisation (e.g. depleted reserves, reduced numbers of staff/volunteers)

Please tell us about anything new or different that your organisation did in seeking to meet the needs of families with school-age children which emerged during lockdown?

- New practices and procedures
- Collaboration with new partner organisations
- New forms of collaboration with existing partners
- New and modified activities and services
- New sources of support and/or food

Please tell us about how you think your organisation did in meeting the needs of families with school-age children which emerged during lockdown?

- What worked well?
- What did not work?
- Facilitators and barriers

Please tell us about any help that you received from the UK, Scottish and local governments during lockdown

- Funding, policies, welfare supports, supplies

- Facilitators and barriers
- Supports that would have helped

Please tell us what the UK, Scottish and local governments could do to help to needs of families with school-age children in future

- Welfare support for families
- Funding, supplies or other resources for organisations such as theirs
- Facilitating collaboration
- Dissemination of information and best practice

Given your experiences of providing emergency food for families with school age children, please tell us what the UK, Scottish and local governments could further do to support the needs of families with school-age children during school holidays outside of lockdown

- Welfare support for families
- Holiday activity programmes

Is there anything else you would like to add?

- Is there anything about the needs of families with school-age children that we haven't covered?
- Is there anything about your organisation's response that we haven't covered?



## Appendix 2: The Scottish Government's six-fold urban-rural classification

<b>Classification</b>	<b>Description</b>
1 Large Urban Areas	Settlements of 125,000 or more people
2 Other Urban Areas	Settlements of 10,000 to 124,999 people
3 Accessible Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people and within 30 minutes' drive of a settlement of 10,000 or more
4 Remote Small Towns	Settlements of 3,000 to 9,999 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more
5 Accessible Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and within a 30 minute drive time of a settlement of 10,000 or more
6 Remote Rural	Areas with a population of less than 3,000 people, and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more

Source: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification-2016/pages/2/>; accessed 21/12/21.

## Appendix 3: Results in detail

This appendix provides a fuller exploration of the rich data provided by interviewees. A summary discussion of these data is presented in section 3.

### 1. The needs of families before (including during school holidays) and during the Covid-19 lockdowns

The range of services highlighted above were provided to FWSAC to varying degrees. Given the nature of some of the organisations, they provided 100% of their services to this group – as demonstrated by Laura who explained that their services are targeted at children in schools;

We support schools in England and Scotland to give out breakfast provision in school, during term time. That could take any form, it could be a breakfast club, it could be classroom provision, that sort of thing. We provide food and delivery to the school and also support in the form of a school partner that works with the school to make sure that they're sort of targeting all the families that might need support and that the breakfast club is accessible and stigma-free, and no barriers to access all those sorts of good things. [008 – Laura]

There were also those organisations who provided a significant proportion of their services to these families:

So some of the funding we've got, especially over the last year is family specific. So we get money from the STV children's appeal, that's family specific, so those funds are spent purely on providing items such as gas and electric, supermarket vouchers and food to families with children. Obviously we still provide some of these services to individuals but we do have family specific funding for that. [010 – Daisy]

However, several organisations, particularly those categorised as foodbanks, estimated that most of their services are provided to groups other than FWSAC:

I would say the majority wasn't. Less than a quarter were families. [016 – Tom]

Prior to lockdown it was fewer. We didn't notice so many children in the past because they were largely adults, either single adults or just couples but laterally with lockdown we've noticed a significant increase in the numbers of families with up to some of them having five or six children. So that's definitely been a trend noticed. [021 – David]

When supplying services to FWSAC the participants reported that they adapted the services to suit this client group. With regard to emergency food parcels several spoke of increasing the size of the parcel or adding some child friendly foods and other goods:

So they get more [laughter]. We try and obviously – at the moment all our bags are made up – they are kind of standard bags that are made up at our unit and then they're taken down and distributed. So we obviously as families came and we kind of look at the bags we've got and if they're more geared towards kids we'll give them to them. Families that have got three or more people in them get double the amount of food than a kind of single person or a couple coming would get. Yes. [018 – Cathy]

With respect to other services, there were those participants who explained that they adapted community meals when delivering them to FWSAC:

Parents, we'd be supporting them to come along to cooking courses and we also would run a four-week child health and well-being course which from memory, because it's so long since we've been able to do it, it would last for between six to ten weeks and there would be a little bit of cooking, there would be lots of physical activities and also, some mental health support, maybe a little bit of mindfulness, that sort of thing. [015 – Glenda]

For the likes of The Big Lunch that I can remember...the only thing different is we provided entertainment, so the entertainment would be for everyone, whereas the entertainment for the seniors would be slightly different. [004 – Claire]

With regard to the demand for services from FWSAC during the school holidays, the organisations reported different experiences. There were those who explained that they did not notice any difference in demand:

Certainly, parents would attend with their children. So children were more visible but it didn't really have a big seasonal impact. [036 – Sue]

Not as much as I ever thought so. When I first started at the food bank I thought we would have a big demand, but actually the time we see the most families is in August when the schools are going back or they've gone back. [037 – Lois]

Indeed there were a small minority of participants who explained there was a decrease in demand for their services during the school holidays prior to the Covid-19 lockdowns:

We didn't [see an increase in demand for emergency food from families with school aged children] and that bucks a lot of trends I know, but we, actually we didn't really because we were always braced for it and ready for it but we didn't see a huge increase. I think in some of the centres we didn't see any increase at all and actually some of the numbers were down [043 – Louise]

In 2019, not so much because the Council themselves put in place a feeding scheme for children during the summer holidays in 2019, so that certainly cut down on the number of children who were referred. [033 – Neil]

Have to be honest, we probably would've not seen that at our foodbank for this. We are one of the few foodbanks to have never seen an increase during school holidays... it

surprises me, because I talk to other foodbanks, because I find out what they have done, but I think possibly in the area that we're in there is a lot of other things go on for kids during the school holidays, so there's a lot of groups do like lunches and everything like that with the kids activities in their lunches, and I think that's probably what stops people coming to us. [047 – Meg]

It is worth noting that participants feel that the absence of an increase in demand for their services during school holiday may be accounted for by an increase in activity programmes which also provides food to FWSAC run by local authorities and other third sector organisations rather than a reduction in need.

However most participants reported that there was an increased demand for their services from FWSAC during the school holiday. This was principally for emergency food parcels:

Certainly, that's always been the case... We get more demand in the holidays, and obviously the last year when the schools were shut, families were seriously struggling to provide food for suddenly having their kids at home all day – you know, giving them breakfast and lunch as well as providing them with a meal in the evening. [023 – Judy]

Yes, definitely we would definitely have more requests for foodbank, and we would also signpost families to lunch provisions that have sprung up here... There's two or three different clubs that now run... well, were running, and families could go, and the children could have lunch and then maybe bring some food home as well. [031- Lisa]

Obviously families feeling the strain when the children are at home in the holidays, and I know that some schools still do the meal project, Food and Fun, whatever over the summer, but when the kids are at home, kids are kids, they're going to go into the cupboard, they're going to want snacks because they're not having the structure of the school day. So in addition to that there are increased energy costs with the kids being at home, they've got the TV on more, they've got the Wi-Fi on more, heating costs might increase, cooking costs will increase, so that all adds pressure on the household budget which is why parents that we often don't see through the rest of the year might come to us in the summer. [010 – Daisy]

Others pointed out that it was particularly during the Christmas holidays that they saw an increase in demand for their services:

Where we have an historical increase in requests for support is up towards Christmas. We do something additional at Christmas time, and actually we do it in conjunction with the local Salvation Army, and that is in addition to our weekly food deliveries, we also give out a Christmas hamper and we do that to people who are on our books at that particular time, but also we do it to a list of people that we get also from the Salvation Army. [011 – Harry]

I would say that from the food bank point of view, we're probably more around Christmas time and I don't know if a lot of that comes from the pressure of parents

feeling that they have to provide presents and things but it then puts obviously more pressure on their budget for other things. [015 – Glenda]

Many organisations also reported an increase in demand for social support during the school holidays and there were those organisations who provided extra services to FWSAC during the school holidays:

But we also have young people who are involved with us through volunteering and through volunteering schemes as well, and we find that most of them that come are from families who are actually struggling as well, and so they relate to the services that we are involved with and like to get involved with the... the young teenagers get involved with us as well from that. [001 – Tanya]

Before lockdown we provided lunch clubs during school holidays, where we tackled holiday hunger and gave some families a bit of respite and work for the kids promoting a healthy lifestyle through supporting healthy eating. We also provided physical activities, field trips, we did coffee mornings for the parents to come in and socialise, and over the holidays we got the kids involved in some extra-curricular things. We did try to get the kids involved in maybe going to the summit in Edinburgh, that was unfortunately cancelled but that was one of the plans to take them to that in the summer. [019 – Dottie]

## 2. Needs and services provided during the Covid-19 lockdowns

Most of the participants reported that biggest need amongst their clients was for emergency food and that their organisation focused primarily on providing food parcels for those in need.

This not only included those who were categorised as foodbanks but across all other types:

Well I mean during lockdown, from 23 March last year until the end of December last year we actually had more clients, more new clients registered with us than we have seen entire client bases in every year beforehand... When I was doing my report for the board a few weeks ago I realised that the numbers that we did last year we had actually, over the period of lockdown we had fed more than 1% of the whole population of the city last year, and that's only because our doors were open, it's just people that have come to us, and 1% doesn't sound a lot but when you realise the population ... to feed 1% of a city is quite... it's horrible in some regards, but I think it's worked well that we've been able to and that amount of people have been able to come to us... The other thing is, is when you phone for a food parcel from other foodbanks, they say it can take up to 72 working hours to get through the lists and get the parcel out to you. So when people are living that kind of lifestyle where they can't wait, then the fact that we've had our doors open means that generally as long as they make it before 4.00 on a Friday they're going to get a parcel, they're going to get food, they're going to get immediate help. [027 - Mark]

So I think and depending on what stage of lockdown we're at. I guess, this is very broad

but in general terms at the start of lockdown for the first maybe three / four weeks so the first month we were crazy busy in every single foodbank centre. In that our numbers were uplifted by at least 150%. [041 – Carrie]

Particularly as the Covid-19 lockdowns continued, several organisations provided a range of support services alongside emergency food parcels including mobile and utility top-ups, advice and support and IT support:

So we found that we were doing electricity and gas top ups, we were doing food... going shopping for food parcels, just sending folk to food banks constantly but aware that they need more than just food bank stuff... we were doing Wi-Fi connections, telephones, mobile phones, all sorts of things that people were needing. [029 – Julie]

The fuel payments, we used to do kind of top-ups for people's gas and electrics here and there. I think we decided to change that and make a bigger impact with that, so we did things like we would pay off people's gas and electric arrears and then give them a significant top up of £300, just so they could get their head clear for a bit. I think when you're in a debt situation, you're just working from one week to the next and don't really get time to make plans. I guess that was a change that we made in how we did that. [007 – Sarah]

In addition many of the participants involved explained that they increasingly adapted their services to an online platform which will be illustrated in section 3.4.2.

Many of the participants reported that they saw an increasing demand from the FWSAC for food parcels during the Covid-19 lockdowns, including families that had never accessed their services before:

There was a slight surge but from April on, increased month by month in the number of parcels when we compared it to the year before. So each month we saw an increase in the amount of parcels going out to clients. In terms of families, I don't have the specifics for school-age children, but the family clients doubled, whereas before it was that 7% or 8%, I think it went up to about 15.9%. More family households were accessing our food bank than before. Also, we work with a lot of local schools and one of them got in touch with us about some of the pupils' families needing parcels or wanting to help because not every client, you know, not every family would be comfortable coming to the food bank. We work with a couple of schools who actually have parcels in their schools and when the teachers or head teachers or whatever are concerned, they can then signpost their clients and could provide them with a parcel there and then to make it easier for the client. [046 – Cat]

In addition to providing emergency food participants also reported providing other services including benefits advice, utility top-ups and home-schooling support:

We helped people who had prepaid meters actually take their tokens – physically take their tokens and take them to a PayPoint place and top them up. So we did that once

and then we also, this year, we became a partner with the Fuel Bank Foundation. And they were offering fuel top ups for free. I mean, you are meant to – when it runs normally for the Fuel Bank Foundation you pay into it. But from January this year they were – they're fully funding it. So we've used that now four times and we intend to use it another couple of times. [036 – Sue]

Yes. I mean, they're not coming into the foodbank to look for help with benefits, it is everything else. They're coming in for but they've clearly got no real education of what to do and how to access things and where to go and it's not helped as well that Citizens Advice and the other agencies that are there to support them like the Jobcentre all of that have all got their doors closed. They will only take phone calls, it's extremely difficult to get through to them. So we've been filling a big bit of that gap, I guess, by trying to access – we've been doing applications ourselves via the foodbank which we wouldn't normally do. [041 – Carrie]

We have certainly formed new relationships with new families, people who have... job loss, furloughed, people who had to make new claims on universal credit and then obviously that system doesn't really kick in for about five or six weeks. So going from having money coming in on a regular income to have absolutely nothing was really quite... was really obviously very, very difficult and quite stressful for families. So we've formed probably quite a lot of new relationships with families and they're still experiencing obviously financial hardship because of job loss and it's not... knowing where to turn to and so through social media or communication we've managed to reach out to the wider community and build a network of partnerships to make sure that we're reaching out to all those who needed our help. [040 – Bet]

However, it must be noted there were a minority of participants who reported that there had been a reduction in demand for food parcels from FWSAC. This they felt was not due to a reduction in need but as a result of other organisations emerging to provide access to emergency food:

I think – there was an initial surge and then I think the pantries and the other organisations that set up – all the little villages seemed to have a locker facility or a physical capability of having food stuff available for people to pick up and so on. That's noticeable because we hear of them, we see them, and we sometimes give items to them just to top up if they're short of certain items. So from our position we haven't seen the major increase we anticipated. And which means also that applies to the school support. But unfortunately, we can't specifically say there's been an increase in that because it may be hidden in the figures that are referred to us. [042 – Dick]

### 3. Differences between the two lockdowns.

With respect to the demand for their services during the first and second Covid-19 lockdowns participants reported a range of experiences. There were those who reported that there was no difference in demand for services and the ways that they worked:

To be honest, I would say they've been much of a muchness, only I haven't done the hot meals for the second lockdown because the resources... I do know that the take-up for the Easter meal is slightly less than the Christmas in the regionals. That's an indication. Yes, it's been a similar experience throughout both from my work side of things. [025 – Cindy]

However, many participants felt that they did not see a rise in demand for their services during the Covid-19 lockdowns, not because there was not an increase in need. Instead, they felt that they did not see the increase in demand they expected as a number of new pop-up organisations provided emergency food services to their communities and because they felt that not all families in need were being referred to their organisations for support<sup>112</sup>. Nonetheless several participants reported their organisation saw a higher demand for their service during the first Covid-19 lockdown compared to the second one:

Yes, because the first thing and that was delivering hot meals every day, and because people were maybe unable to go to a shop or were unable to access food because food become quite limited because people were panic buying, and being able to have a base... and we had... we set up pantries as well where people could obviously come along socially distanced and be able to come in and take things from the pantry which included hot food. But mostly we delivered and that was because of people were obviously... well obviously the first restrictions were not allowed out the house and so forth. Whereas I think the second lockdown in January we did not do an every day delivery service, we had reduced that delivery service and met the needs of the community by asking them "What do you need?" and that seemed to be enough. [040 – Bet]

The demand in the first lockdown was significantly higher. You know our peak month was 2,600 (*parcels*) in the first lockdown and our peak month in the second lockdown was 1,800 so it was significantly higher... I just think there was a lot more panic, you know when people didn't really know the ins and outs of the disease... By the time, the second lockdown came round the supermarkets were a lot more delivery capacity so you know, the second lockdown we weren't delivering food to anyone who could afford to buy it. Whereas in the first lockdown we were delivering quite a lot of that because there was people, genuinely elderly folk who could afford to buy it but couldn't get a delivery slot and their family were living far away [024 – Des]

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<sup>112</sup> See Dick in section 2 above.



On the other hand, there were a number of organisations that saw a higher demand and found it mentally more difficult for staff and clients in the second Covid-19 lockdown than they did during the first Covid-19 lockdown:

I think the second lockdown was harder, and it was particularly harder for my staff. All my staff have got school age children and the schooling was ramped up, which is obviously what the children and schools needed, but that made it much harder for staff to work if they were having to juggle two children on different Google Meet things, and all that type of stuff... I think it's just harder to get your head round the fact that... you know, we've talked about this, when we shut the office last March if anyone had said, "This March, we still wouldn't have had a staff meeting in here", I think we'd have all gone a bit mad. But, yes, I think it's just different, I think because of the winter, the worry of people being stuck in much more. I know today it's a beautiful day, but we all know the benefit of getting out and getting some fresh air and a break [031 – Lisa]

There was also one participant who said the second Covid-19 lockdown was more difficult because there was not the same amount of funding available than there was during the first:

I think because we had access to all the funding that we'd got first lockdown, we would have found this lockdown incredibly difficult. The availability of funding has decreased. I mean, first lockdown, we would get emails from funders saying, "We have funding, would you like it?" Whereas previous to that, you know, you would have to find the right funder what we needed, it would be a very long and drawn-out process, a lot of paperwork, lots of interviews. Quite often during the first lockdown, the funder would say, "We've got money, would you like it?" We'd say yes and then it would be in our bank. A lot of barriers were taken down to enable access to funding the first time around but that doesn't seem to be quite the case this time around. Yeah, that's the main thing. [007 - Anna]

#### 4. Organisations and participants positions

This section of the report will outline a typology of organisations based on these services they provided prior to the Covid-19 lockdown before highlighting the positions research participants held within these organisations and the services they tailored to FWSAC before the lockdown, with a particular focus on school holiday provisioning.

As indicated there were five types of organisations that took part in the study – foodbanks, foodbanks plus, community hubs, local authorities and other types. Organisations were categorised according to the services they provided prior to lockdown.

## 4.1 Foodbanks

There were those organisations which almost exclusively focussed on the supply of emergency food:

Right. It was initially a group of ...Christian churches...(*who*) got together to provide food for people who were hungry and the way it was organized was that the base was at an Episcopalian Church, and six churches were involved, ..., each would take a week and on Monday, Wednesday and Friday they would give out food. [005 – Edmund]

(W)e provide emergency food parcels for local people ... that for whatever reason don't have sufficient money available to be able to go out and buy the food themselves. So that can be anything from an individual up to the largest family that I have fed since I took over in 2016 was a family of 13 people. [033- Neil]

These organisations were categorised as Foodbanks and there was 17 organisations in this category in this study. However, it must be noted that, even those organisations who focused primarily on providing emergency food for those in need, almost all would provide other support services, such as signposting to other support organisations and informal social support:

Normally we would have food bank centres, people would be referred to the centres, they would go in, get their food parcels, have a cup of tea, a biscuit, a chat, and then we were able to offer any other support. [039-Liz]

It is also worth noting that fourteen of the organisations categorised as foodbanks operated in urban/rural areas 1 and 2 with only four being located in areas 3 and 6.

## 4.2 Foodbanks plus

The distinction between foodbanks and foodbanks plus is somewhat blurred, particularly as these organisations have adapted to work within the lockdown. For the purposes of this study, foodbanks plus refer to those organisations which focus on providing a range of services including providing emergency food for those in needed. The other services provided included benefits advice, community gardening, cookery classes, budgeting advice and community meals. There were 7 organisations assigned to this category:

We've got a number of projects we've been involved in including supporting people to provide or learn basic cookery skills, we have got what we call a safe team support advice line and education where we support people in terms of ensuring that they can access their benefit entitlements. In addition, obviously there are two elements of addressing food insecurity we're directly involved in. One of these is those that require emergency food in terms of an emergency food parcel, we've done that since 2012, and we also have developed what we call community pantries whereby people join as a

member and then can access not just the ambient food but chilled, frozen, fresh food and they pay us a membership in a small weekly amount where they're able to select ten items basically, so they do a bit of a shop rather than just being given a food parcel. [003 – Stewart]

Pre-lockdown we had 11 distribution centres, we had a charity shop, we had about 250 volunteers, yeah, we were just plodding along looking at different ways to try and end poverty. We had loads of plans for 2020, we were going to start cooking classes and all sorts of things and it just completely got hit on the head. [037 – Lois]

Although the numbers are small, it may be worth noting that five of seven organisations categorised as foodbanks plus operated in urban/rural areas 1 and 2.

#### 4.3 Community Hubs

Again the distinction between foodbanks plus and community hubs is blurred but we categorise community hubs as those organisations embedded in a particular area who provide a wide range of services which includes providing food support services. There were 9 organisations in this category:

Well we're a Community Flat<sup>113</sup>, so we're funded through the Fairer fund, so we're run by a management committee. In normal times, we normally provide adult learning classes, we've got a crèche and my role is to provide support and I also provide a bit of benefits advice for people on benefits and we also do have a foodbank as well. [009 – Anna]

Our charity has a focus on support, so that's supporting and helping people in crisis or with mental health issues, drugs and alcohol issues or experiencing food poverty or needing help with navigating the benefits system, you know, experiencing poverty in general, out-of-work poverty. We also have a focus on employability and training and our goal, if you like, is to help people move into the world of work where possible. And we also have two community garden spaces, so we do a lot of internal signposting within our organisation to build up people's confidence and social skills, like I say, and we also have a training subsidiary, which is a CITP-registered construction company that provides a supported pathway to employment. We deliver modern apprenticeships in stonemasonry and joinery, and we also deliver SQA qualifications, National Certificate Award in Construction and National Certificate in Rural Skills. We also deliver any food initiatives within our community [017 – Gemma]

Although the numbers were low the community hubs were fairly evenly spread across urban/rural areas 1 to 4.

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<sup>113</sup> Defined as a community home in this study.

#### 4.4 Local Authorities and Others

There were two representative from local authorities that took part in the research and who were involved with emergency food provisioning either directly or indirectly through supporting agencies that were involved in doing so<sup>114</sup>. There were three organisations which did not fit into the defined categories and have been allocated into others. This was largely due to the particular type of support they provided before the lockdown:

We support schools in England and Scotland to give out breakfast provision in school, during term time. That could take any form, it could be a breakfast club, it could be classroom provision, that sort of thing. We provide food and delivery to the school and also support in the form of a school partner that works with the school to make sure that they're sort of targeting all the families that might need support and that the breakfast club is accessible and stigma-free, and no barriers to access all those sorts of good things. [008 – Laura]

The organisations have therefore been categorised based upon the services that they provide rather than structural features. However it must be noted that the distinction between the types of organisation prior to the lockdown was blurred. There were those who were categorised as foodbanks which provided other services such as benefits advice and signposting to other services.

#### 4.5 Blurred distinction between organisations

The distinction between organisations became increasingly blurred especially at the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdowns with many foodbanks plus and community hubs focusing primarily on emergency food provisioning:

The food was from a certain funder and it was all planned and prepared and delivered out by volunteers, so we wouldn't normally do that. We normally just run our cafes and offer something to take home, and it covered a few meals and things like that for families. [012 – Sally]

So we moved to a delivery only service, so that would've been in place, I mean gosh, by April, end of April certainly, so really, really quickly we moved to a delivery only service, we got support from the council, which was great, to facilitate... we recruited volunteers really quickly, so we were able to maintain that service for folk. [043 – Louise]

As the Covid-19 lockdowns continued, several organisations provided a range of support services alongside emergency food parcels including mobile and utility top-ups, advice and

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<sup>114</sup> See Andrew in section 3.3 of the main body of the report.

support and IT support:

So we found that we were doing electricity and gas top ups, we were doing food... going shopping for food parcels, just sending folk to food banks constantly but aware that they need more than just food bank stuff... we were doing Wi-Fi connections, telephones, mobile phones, all sorts of things that people were needing. [029 – Julie]

The fuel payments, we used to do kind of top-ups for people's gas and electrics here and there. I think we decided to change that and make a bigger impact with that, so we did things like we would pay off people's gas and electric arrears and then give them a significant top up of £300, just so they could get their head clear for a bit. I think when you're in a debt situation, you're just working from one week to the next and don't really get time to make plans. I guess that was a change that we made in how we did that. [007 – Sarah]

It was mainly food, but as word got round... I mean obviously I couldn't have sit down appointments, which is what I would normally do; I couldn't do that for social distancing. I wouldn't have been able to do that anyway with the number of people coming to the door, I wouldn't have been able to give anyone more than five minutes. So I was giving people five minutes at the door where they were giving me a very basic quick rundown of their situation and I was able to advise them on what they should do or who they should go and speak to. [027 – Mark]

We got a lot of funding for tech digital support. There was a lot of support out there financially for it. I think we were very fortunate that there is a few of my colleagues and myself, that are quite technically minded, so we were able to offer that support ourselves and one of them had been on a course about setting technology up with our elderly and things like that. The Scottish Government recently gave us a few laptops to give out to families and things, and the elders too. So, we're looking at that at the moment and getting that sorted as well. [019 – Dottie]

Many of the organisation closed their doors and moved from a pick-up to a delivery service, particularly at the beginning of the Covid-19 lockdown:

Yeah I mean before lockdown 50% of the parcels would be issued from our main base and then we have, because we cover a very large geographic area it's actually 3,500 square miles, but it is hugely rural we, there's lots of small towns of 2,000, 3,000 people which couldn't possibly sustain a food bank on their own but they have people who need food parcels. So the solutions we found was mainly ... putting food parcels in libraries, and so we're using 15 of the local libraries across the regions would hold our food parcels as well as some similar small charities would hold them as well, so we'd normally have 25, what we call satellite collections... Then of course everything had to change very quickly, the libraries were all closed for the duration as were most of the offices of the charities we were working with. So we had to set up six new, I guess you'd call them distribution points which were people who had premises where they could put freezers in and collect things for volunteers to deliver food parcels, and so since the lockdown we've gone to pretty much 100% deliveries and that was the way to be able to do everything safely because of course you could just arrive at someone's premises, knock the door, leave the parcel at the door and step back two or three paces and that just enable us to maintain social distancing at all times. [024 – Des]

So we moved to a delivery only service, so that would've been in place, I mean gosh, by April, end of April certainly, so really, really quickly we moved to a delivery only service, we got support from the council, which was great, to facilitate... we recruited volunteers really quickly, so we were able to maintain that service for folk. [043 – Louise]

Others moved their services from face to face to online service provision:

I mean, I think in the beginning it was just phone calls and we focused on providing people with the things that they were missing and just keeping their spirits up, meeting their needs that way, and then at some point towards the end of last year, we decided that we wanted to try and introduce some of our activities that we'd done previously but obviously in a virtual world. For example, we are now doing our online training courses for nutrition and food safety and we are doing cooking courses online, which are very different, where we drop off the ingredients and then we get together on a Zoom call and watch a video and get some people to cook it along, or with the video, or they would cook it afterwards and show us some evidence of what they've done and just have that communication and ask us if they're stuck and so on and so forth. We've managed to adapt that, but yes it's a very different world now... We've got a robust programme of online activities, pretty much something every day, even some activities in the evening, where people can get involved, and the volunteers are helping and leading some of the activities too. But it's not the same as face to face, because I think they get something out of that as well. [014 – Frances]

We did offer... money advice service, so we've got debt advisors, so that was done through a helpline and just leafleted in parcels... benefit applications, she was putting in a lot, applying for benefits for a lot of people, applying for grants, just basically... I think a lot of people at that point you know, a lot of people were applying for benefits for the first time, they'd never been in this situation before so they didn't know how the system works or what you do, so yeah, a lot of benefit applications at the beginning. But that was the only additional support that we were able to offer was the helpline because everything went online, everything went from home. [039 – Liz]

Yeah, so some of our families have been accessing the music weeks that we run online, some of them have been accessing the quiz we've been doing once a fortnight on YouTube. There's been... we've been doing welfare checks... Quite often when we ring people, for example, when I ring a family member we'll check that you know, "What do you need more of this week?" or something like that, we'll check what people need, and they'll often be on the phone for half an hour just talking about things that are going wrong, things that are becoming a difficulty and things like that. [002-Phyllis]

So we did things like the online homework club that was, yeah so I guess there was a lot of effort being put into supporting families with wellbeing, but yeah I can't give any detail on that either, I just know that that was kind of going on. Zoom sessions where possible or more sort of individualised support, contact with families on an individual basis. [020 – Jana]

For those organisations that remained open to the public they had to adapt how they served clients to remain within the regulations:

They can walk up. Our foodbank is open between 10 and 1 every day, and then 2 and 4, Monday to Friday, and they can just turn up between those hours. They have to queue outside. They don't access the building, they have to observe social distancing. We have the area marked. They have to wear masks. As I say, they are greeted at our reception door by staff there, and we have food parcels made up. [023 – Judy]

Many of the organisations who preferred clients to come to them through a paper referral moved from paper to e-referrals:

So because as I said already, we rely on that referral, traditionally people would, I would say 90% of the time people would come to the door with their voucher in their hand... and they would get their parcel. Immediately that changed overnight because nobody was open, and even agencies that were open over the phone they then couldn't issue a referral. So we very quickly in a short space of time had to then establish a phone and email referral route... But what happened, about a month after lockdown the council stepped in, we kept asking them for help because we weren't reaching people and people weren't reaching us and we were just worried what people were doing for food. So along with the council providing food help they also issued a phone number that we then could use and give to people and it just channelled everybody through a single support helpline, and when the people phoned that if they self-referred looking for food they would get a referral to us, we would get an email and we could... we established a new referral route that way. [044 – May]

Some organisation also started to buy food or provide vouchers rather than rely on food donations from individuals and other organisations:

But we also had to start buying bulk, so that we can meet the demands, because we knew we didn't have the stock. We occasionally needed to buy food, but not in the way that we had to do in the pandemic. [047 – Meg]

Our foodbank did a great thing and when they couldn't hand the produce out, they gave people vouchers instead for high street shops, so vouchers for the butchers, vouchers for the fishmongers, which means people have to go and they have to buy ingredients that need cooking, but they also support local businesses and they get the confidence to start walking into these shops, which is so important. [025 – Cindy]

There were organisations who adapted their food service when dealing with families and those who targeted their services to families:

During the pandemic we were providing a lot of food services or trying to get money and resources to deliver food services to people, so I'm just organising this week the Easter meal at Easter with some crafts and stuff. We're targeting families through the schools that are on free school meals, low income, and that are known to the schools to be struggling. [026 – Lucy]

Well we give them... an individual gets one box with pretty much three days' worth of food, the families get two boxes and numerous carrier bags full, so we're definitely aware that... our aim is to give three days' of food, that's but we give them probably a week, a week's worth of food depending, if we've got the stuff we give it to them and

the community are pretty good in supporting us so we're able to provide enough food for a family for a longer period of time. [032 – Karen]

Then for the food parcels we still put out the extra bits you know, “Oh, it's a family of five”, and the referral we get through shows us zero to five, five to 11, 11 to 16, so what really... and that's the limitation of the system. So what we really pushed hard on was for referral partners, because on the e-referral they can tell us the specific ages of the children if they type it in, so we pushed a little hard to say, “Look, tell us the absolute ages of the children and we'll tailor that as much as we can”, because zero to four, “Right, well do they need nappies, do they not need nappies? Are they on baby food or can they eat... are they four and can eat normal adult food?” so we pushed that really hard. But by the very fact folk weren't able to come in and choose, the parcels wouldn't have been as tailored, that's just... it is what it is I guess. But we did what we could to tailor it as much as possible and ask for as much information. We would phone, there's a capacity for referral partners to leave phone numbers on the system if the recipient gives consent. So if it was particularly maybe a young family or a big family we would phone and say, “Look, what size of nappies? Is your teenager 11, are they 16, is it a girl, do they need sanitary stuff?” just so we can tailor it as much as possible, but it wasn't as good as if the folk had been coming in. [043- Louise]

There were also those organisations which provided additional online activities and home schooling support to families:

Yeah, so some of our families have been accessing the music weeks that we run online, some of them have been accessing the quiz we've been doing once a fortnight on YouTube. There's been... we've been doing welfare checks... Quite often when we ring people, for example, when I ring a family member we'll check that you know, “What do you need more of this week?” or something like that, we'll check what people need, and they'll often be on the phone for half an hour just talking about things that are going wrong, things that are becoming a difficulty and things like that. [002-Phyllis]

We've had some activities that currently actually that the *Printers* are doing a project for young people called “Boredom box” and what we're doing is working with a wider network to identify other projects and some young folk that would actually benefit from this project. Similarly we did some work with the city about getting at various points just information but also little projects and stuff out through the parcels. We've got a growing officer here, there's huge work going on developing spaces in the community where the community can come together and develop growing. Again, during that first lockdown very difficult to get that going, but she developed a seed project to provide through our social media folk who were interested in growing some plants in the house with some help with how to grow and she had something like about 250 folk involved doing little bits of community growing and that could be growing a certain plant outside or just in their houses. [003 – Stewart]

Indeed there were those organisations who felt that they adapted so well that they met all the needs of their communities and could not think of anything that did not work well:

I'm struggling with that one. I think we've just basically made it work you know. Whatever – no I think just basically we're doing fine. [021 – David]



I think, no, I think we've just had to... I think we've responded incredibly well actually considering that I'm paid for three short days a week, 20 hours a week and everybody else is a volunteer, I think we've actually risen to the challenge of feeding hundreds of people remarkably well. I think that if all these volunteers, the whole organisation is completely based on volunteers really, I think they've done an incredible job, and I don't know what would happen if the food bank... if we weren't here I don't know what would happen to these people who depend on us, I really don't know. [032 – Karen]

Despite limitations participants reported that their organisations met a great number of needs by adapting their services and highlighted a number of facilitators and barriers to modifying their practices effectively. Most felt that their organisations adapted well during the Covid-19 lockdowns and identified a number of things they felt facilitated those modifications including the commitment and experience of staff and volunteers, the flexibility of their organisations, community support and close collaboration with partners:

I'll be honest and put it down to staff members I've got. I've got two very – well, two 30-year-old staff members who are very, very switched onto the dangers of Covid... And I've been very fortunate with the staff members but also the volunteers have been – those who stayed have worked really hard... I've got a very strong group of volunteers, which is a great thing to have. [034 – Mike]

I think we're fortunate to have lots of capable people with a sort of can-do attitude. It was completely new to us, so we just thought about what the systems needed and did it. [028 – Linda]

Really the versatility of our volunteers and the community support which has funded this extra activity, because it does cost quite a lot extra to buy the food, we have a fair amount donated by the members of the public at the local supermarkets but we have to top it up quite considerably with purchasing from the wholesalers, and from the local supermarkets. By virtue of people giving we're able to scale up our operation. [021 – David]

Obviously working in partnership really helped us to reach out to the most vulnerable families and we've got really good working relationships with the health visiting team, there's the National Health Service and there's different city organisations that we've got good working relationships, and I think that really helped then when people were calling them to say, "I need help", and then they were able to pass their information on to us. So I think probably having those trusted relationships or having a well-established connected project, we've been running for over 25 years, I think having that has been really positive because we're well known in the community. [040 – Bet]

Nonetheless there were those participants who pointed to some failures including maintaining a range of timely services and providing services to hard to reach families:

Probably. Sometimes it has been difficult. Folk maybe had to wait because we're not maybe very organised and got parcels to whoever. Probably it's times, really, because we're only open three days and we have to work from home, so it's probably... maybe it would be handy if we were open more hours or whatever, but obviously that'll happen. [009 – Anna]

No, I mean I always feel, always, I mean this isn't to do with the pandemic, I mean I always feel that I would really like to know if we're missing out on people, but that's just an ongoing worry that we always have, because we know that in the cities for example, people come into food banks and get food, well we don't have that facility. [038 – Mary]

At the same time, however, research participants did identify barriers to adapting their services effectively including premises, geographical location, and lack of referrals, lack of social contact, lack of resources and lack of IT amongst the target clients:

I mean delivery has been difficult for some people because sometimes people are quite remote and I think making sure that we keep tabs on the Facebook page and the website that's quite stressful for people. We got something in the local paper recently in order to try and take the heat off people contacting through Facebook, we tried to get them to use the Citizens Advice phone number instead for example. So yeah, I mean these are stresses aren't they, but I would say our volunteers have done really well. [038 – Mary]

The community work just doesn't work remotely, it's really, really hard for us to provide the high level of support we're used to providing, and our services need that contact. Also I know some food banks go toward, "We're open for one and half hours on a Wednesday", a lot of our service users don't operate like that, their lifestyles are quite chaotic so if they need fed they need fed now, they don't need fed a week on Thursday at 1.00pm and a lot of them if you say 1.00pm they're not going to understand what's really going on there. It really was difficult. [010 – Daisy]

So this is just what I gathered from what colleagues were saying and meetings and things, I didn't have any direct involvement but I think the biggest need was digital exclusion. So the homework clubs they tried to offer online sessions but the children couldn't attend because maybe the parents only had one device and they had to use that, it couldn't be used by the children to attend the session. So, and I believe that that was also then an issue that was reflected across other services as well. Data, credit, access to devices was the main barrier. [020 – Jana]

## 5. Position within the organisation

### 5.1 Managers and project workers

Twenty-five interviewees identified as managers of the organisations that they worked in:

I'm the service manager in the organisation... I have appointed the staff, I supervise the staff, I see to all the budgets, I do all the fundraising, I do the... I liaise with the

trustees about accounts, I do the... I go to area meetings like community planning partnerships and food bank meetings, and I also do, I do some hands on work as well like delivering food parcels and well helping to run their community café and I also facilitate a couple of the groups that we run. Ordinarily we run recovery groups and things like that so I coordinate and facilitate recovery groups. [001- Tanya]

My role is manager. I work 20 hours a week and we also have another member of staff a coordinator who also works 20 hours. And then a team of volunteers. [030 – Maria]

Thirteen participants identified as being project workers providing support to clients across a number of different areas:

I'm a community food worker. I work in a small town ... in October 2019, I took on a new role as the development worker of a community-owned greengrocers on the high street. My role has been extended slightly anyway to become slightly more communications-based, but the idea was always to continue with these food projects at the same time. [025 – Cindy]

Okay. I work for a charity and the purpose of the charity is to tackle health inequalities, especially in the most deprived areas. And we do a range of activities from sort of pre-birth all the way up to older people that would be supported by us, and I am one of the project workers that help to present some of the activities and coordinate some of the wellbeing things that we offer. [014 – Frances]

I am the Food Project Coordinator, that's my title at the moment and yeah, my role involves developing access to food for asylum seekers. [020 – Jana]

## 5.2 Board Members and Volunteers

Six interviews identified themselves as board members and/or volunteers. This involved a variety of different activities within the organisation:

I'm involved with the volunteer coordination. So in effect manage the rotas, the volunteers and the information for the people wishing to get involved. I'm also joint store manager so we oversee what comes in, what our needs are, what we stock checking and whatnot. I don't do anything myself it is other volunteers that come in and help. [042 – Dick]

My connection with the food bank is because we're one of the seven churches that run it and I'm the rector of one of the seven. When lockdown started, the volunteer base diminished to about two and the need immediately more than doubled so I then took over a sort of, coordinating role to get it up and running during lockdown...Prior to lockdown it was relatively arm's length because we had people to do it so I was interested in it but only volunteered when there were gaps, that sort of thing. [016 – Tom]

It is worth noting that whilst the participants identified as being in specific roles, the distinction between the roles was often blurred and managers, project workers, board members and

volunteers often worked across all the organisations' activities and their roles often evolved over time in response to what their organisations and service users required.

## 6. The impact of the Covid-19 lockdowns on organisations and the supports provided

Continuing to provide services and adapting to the Covid-19 lockdowns had an impact on the organisations and participants pointed to the impact the Covid-19 pandemic and the lockdowns had on the staff and volunteers, on the resources available and the implications this may have for the future.

### 6.1 Impact on staff and volunteers

Participants reported that many of their staff and volunteers had to stay at home due to being furloughed, the limited capacity of building to accommodate numbers within guidelines and due to shielding:

We've managed to keep ourselves going and we have... so, I furloughed nine members of my staff, had a skeleton team of five actually physically at the centre. Three people, the office manager and the warehouse manager working there, and we've had two guys, one driver and a van hand, working all the time. [023 – Judy]

Yeah, so volunteers is a big one, we're not in a big building so we can't have – we don't have as many volunteers in. So a lot of our volunteers are still at home not able to volunteer with us. We had a huge amount of elderly volunteers because we're run in conjunction with the church so a lot of them wasn't able to volunteer at the start. So even if there had been a space and a role for them, they wouldn't have come in because they were shielding. [030 – Maria]

There were also those participants who explained the workload and stress levels increased during the Covid-19 lockdown for staff and volunteers who continued to work:

I think it was the volume all at once. We were trying to help people well and not just give lots of food out, that's not how we operate. We always want to make sure we're actually supporting them and getting them... and really make sure we help them with underlying causes. We need to make sure they're not becoming dependent. But I think with the lockdown, you just couldn't have that, you could have a phone call but there's a difference about face to face to contact that allows people to actually speak to you and feel comfortable with you. I think even for the volunteers, that limitation, just giving out a parcel, it was quite a difference to how we operated before so that kind of affected morale in terms of how they approached it because it wasn't, you know, we weren't being able to help. It was, "Okay, here's what we can do for now," but you

know what you were lacking. If you had the chances and the opportunity, you could do so much more. That was a big difference. [046 – Cat]

I think it just hasn't stopped the whole thing... since last March. Even just before March I had to switch my work phone off and just before New Year, I had a kidney infection and I went to the doctor and my blood pressure was through the roof. I ended up getting signed off for a month because I was so unwell, but I hadn't kind of realised, I just kept going. I think there's a few people in that position that have been working through it, that have kind of just kept going. And to the extreme, the National Health Service has been saying that in vain, you know? There are folk like supermarket workers and stuff that will be in the same position, you know, they've kept going. It's been quite tense, I think, at times. Although things are open, people have then... just feeling quite tense. [026 – Lucy]

Despite the pressures of working under Covid-19 lockdown conditions, it is also important to note that participants reported positive impacts on staff and volunteers working during the Covid-19 lockdowns:

I think it's brought us together and helped us to realise what an important service we're providing. Well I think so. I think so people do enjoy helping, I mean there are some things we do like we get large quantities of sugar that we split into smaller containers and people do that and I think derive genuine, yeah pleasure from knowing that they're saving money in terms of not buying little bags, we'll buy big bags and split them ourselves. So yeah I think there is a sense of worth with these sort of jobs. [021 – David]

Well working at the food bank you have that sense of achievement and the sense that you have made a difference, and I think that's why most people work at the food bank. [037 – Lois]

## 6.2 Impact on resources

Participants reported that the Covid-19 lockdowns had an impact on the resources available both in terms of food and finances. There were a minority of participants who explained that they experienced a drop in revenue because some of their services had to be closed down:

Our social enterprise basically we had the... the view of the social enterprise is any profit goes back into the charity bit, the social enterprise was basically it completely closed down but obviously a lot of offices that we supply fruit and veg to et cetera, closed, and haven't reopened. [003 – Stewart]

However greater number of participants explained that their financial resources increased through private donations and government funding:

Well, the obvious thing is that before lockdown we had about 1,500 quid in the bank at the moment we've got about 30,000. I mean, people have been incredibly generous and that's partly through the churches. All the churches gave their Christmas collection to the food bank and individuals have been incredibly generous. The turnover for pretty much 100 bags a week at the moment, as you can imagine that's expensive but we know

that we can keep going as long as we need to at that rate at the moment, which is brilliant. [016 – Tom]

We have had a few times where our pantry's been quite low but we're very fortunate, in fact we've got a great team that are very capable in terms of funding and stuff, so we've been very fortunate in that sense. We get a lot of support from FareShare and Tesco, and stuff. They offer us a lot of support in terms of food and giving us resources when we possibly need it and anything they can donate, they do. Local cooperatives and stuff as well, we've got a very good support network and there's always a pocket of money aside for anything that we are quite scarce of, we can go buy. [019 – Dottie]

We've been really lucky, actually. Because of the shop, we've managed to get quite a lot of grant support, Government grant support, to help the shop out, which has kept us afloat. Without it, I think we would have sunk you know, we would not have managed. There's been quite a lot of grant aid available for food projects, and I've been tapping into that, so financially on that point, we've been fine as well, and have just had confirmation of a grant to keep my role going for the next few years. [025 – Cindy]

With the onslaught of the first lockdown, there was various Scottish Government funding, resilience funding, sub-sector resilience funding. There was community funding and locally, a lot of private businesses donated, individuals donated. Then I'd say within a few weeks there was the offer of digital support - SCVO was a major one for that, Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations. We had funds from organisations like the Inspiring Scotland Foundation, that was another one... actually, we had further resilience funding from them. Lots of the big supermarkets offered lots of funding, £500 here, £1000 there. [017 – Gemma]

It came from the government, a lot of it. And through various places, so voluntary organisations could apply for government money as well, for different parts of their... dealing with the pandemic. So if they needed more gadgets or they needed more stuff, they were able to apply for money. But councils got a chunk of money I would say every term, really. There's just been more money coming in. We got funds for our mental health services, we got money for food services, we got money for dealing with expanding some of the services out there that are dealing with people on benefits. You know, they would get more money to employ more people or for fuel payments, especially during the winter time. It was geared more towards those kinds of things. There is still money coming in, but at some point that is going to dry up. [026 – Lucy]

Many participants also explained that their food resources increased, and when this did not happen through food donations, many explained that they had the financial resources to buy food to service their emergency food parcels:

Yeah, we're not getting as much food donations, although it is getting better, we're not getting as much through supermarkets, through the trolleys in the supermarkets. But, because we are spending a lot more money we are actually buying what we need and because people have been so generous in our area, at the moment we have no financial problems whatsoever. Sorry, I'm going on. So no worries about running out of supplies to meet people's needs. No, not really. As I say if we need anything we just go buy it. [005 – Edmund]

And the supermarkets, we have baskets in Tesco and in Lidl, and people fill those baskets up...And also, the wholesaler, they gave us donations from them... they bring them down. And the butchers, the butchers were great, you know. They would pack up sausages for us and pack up chicken breasts for us with a packet of mince and what have you and fill up our freezers for us, and it was fantastic. Amazingly, we could actually give these families meat as well, because the most expensive thing on your shopping list is generally meat and that's something that we don't normally have, other than tins, and it was really lovely to be able to just hand out fresh milk and even meat. [001 – Tanya]

### 6.3 Implications for the future

There were those organisations who explained that some of the changes they introduce during the Covid-19 lockdowns will remain as they represent a more effective way of working:

In terms of how we run the foodbanks there are definitely things we'll take from it and run the foodbank differently, in terms of doing the e referrals which is having more dialogue with the referrers because we're in direct contact with them. That's also allowed us to see how many vouchers and individuals had before they'd turn up at the door. So we can kind of set expectations. So our hope is that we'll be able to continue with that side of things afterwards. Yeah, I think the big one for us is definitely communicating with our partner agencies in the community. [030 – Maria]

I think it's given us a bit of a shakeup in terms of maybe doing things in a different way so there's more effective... not that we weren't doing anything effective before, it's maybe just if we were pre-Covid we would still be doing things the way that we have done for years, and years, and years, and maybe the way that we've adapted that... maybe working a bit smarter. It's easier to link in with partners because there is this sort of... I suppose you'd call it camaraderie of all the local groups working together. Whereas maybe in the past certain groups were grouped with certain other groups, whereas now it's just a bit more neutral and we're all kind of in it together. Yes, I think so. I think we've turned a corner and we've changed in a way, like I said before, that we were more efficient, and we are communicating better, and we've had to work smarter. We're definitely going to be an improved *organisation*, not that we needed to improve, but we're sort of like a souped-up version now, so yes. [014 – Frances]

Many of the participants also explained that they felt positive about the continuing need for their organisations and that there was little prospect of the organisation closing down as they expected that there would be an increasing demand for their services:

I think primarily the impact, the lasting impact actually will be a positive on in some ways you know, even though I'm saying that, I'm very tired and things. I think lasting impact ultimately will be positive in that for the second year of our little charity running we've become really well known and also there's so much goodwill towards us and things like that. Then also in terms of people becoming really aware of situations, other families and people are living through I would say is really positive too in terms of motivating people to get involved with their communities and things. So I think on the

whole there's a positive impact. I think we need now, which we're just beginning to do, is to realign where we're going and what we see you know, the recovery of this is, which is a hard thing to think because we're not actually in recovery yet, we're still in a pandemic but the goalposts are changing a little bit but just yeah, just working the best way to move forward. [029 – Julie]

However, there were those participants who were more pessimistic about the future due to their doubts of being able to cope with demand and the funding from the authorities and the financial donations from the community drying up:

You've then got to look at what's going to be the government's, local, national, SG's response to whatever the financial constraints will be in order to pay for Covid, so how are they going to balance the books over time and then at that point we'll see you know, whether as an organisation kind of funding will continue and mainly local support, things like FareShare itself, lottery funding if that will be maintained. [003 – Stewart]

I would hate to think that we would have to downsize us. I've been here seven and a half years and we started with four staff and we're now at eight, and I'd hate to think that we'd have to lose staff because we can't find funding. The worry is that funders have used up all their money to help Covid and then there's not much left going forward. The local council are really supportive of us, and we've got our next year's funding for that, but it doesn't cover the full cost of what we do here. [031- Lisa]

## 7. Supports from collaborators, the community and the local authorities

### 7.1 Collaborators

Almost all the participants reported that the collaborations with other partners including local authorities, other emergency food providers and business was a very important component of their work and allowed them to meet the needs of their clients more effectively:

We have... there's been a community hub meeting that's taking place every week now that wasn't in existence before. So basically that's social work and others, there's a children's charity, there's us, there's a representative from the schools, there's council people from various parts of the council, another voluntary organisation that we just have a catch up every Thursday morning for an hour to try and make sure that everybody's got all the info and you know, any opportunities for more money or more collaborative working, and that's worked really well. I think that's really brought... really a good thing for quite disparate agencies who are working in the same field to come together. [032 – Karen]

So we do provide support to schools via our school partners who kind of work with the school to target families, and how, you know... it's all to do with how breakfast provision is delivered... So we work with *Some Companies*... trying to think. Quaker Oats, those sorts of things, Kellogg's, Morrison's, they were incredibly flexible. Anyone that we went to for help was there to give us either food donations or you know, in the case of Amazon, make sure that we could deliver anywhere we wanted to in the



country. So we already had a lot of those relationships, but it was just that actually, when we sort of proposed to them that we would need more scope to do new and different things and that it was probably going to cost us more as an organisation, so how could they help us bring down those costs. I think *one company* was a new partnership that came on board, but I think we may have had small conversations with them and it was just, sort of, lockdown was the impetus. Morrison's gave us free cereal which was a new partnership, we hadn't had that before. [008 – Laura]

Many participants reported that they saw benefits from working more closely with partners and that this has resulted in new sources of food:

It's probably just been much more hands-on for me especially. I'm just thinking only because we were doing it yesterday, the development group and stuff, we would have always had gone along to meetings and we've had a pop-up cafe with them in the past, but I would say over the whole Covid period we were supporting the council well-being line so it's been much more of a day-to-day working partnership, as opposed to coming in on specific projects and then you don't do anything again maybe until the next time. They supported us with delivering our food boxes and we were able to support them with work that they were doing, and I think going forward, everything will have to be like that going forward now. [015 – Glenda]

The majority of our food is donated directly by the public, but during lockdown we did have a few deliveries from FareShare and the council and the voluntary sector, they got funding from SG for food but they asked us to accept it and administer it rather than them trying to set up a food bank... Then obviously we got the hub up and running to be able to issue parcels to people who were isolating, so we did link with them. [035 – Helga]

## 7.2 Community support

In addition to getting support from collaborators, many participants explained that they also got food and cash donations from private organisations and individual members of their communities:

All of our food is donated by the public in collection points around supermarkets and we have a relationship with Tesco, which we get as part of the agreement with Trussell Trust, so we have quite a strong partnership with Tesco. The majority of our funding for our charity comes from just public donations and some of the money comes through Tesco as well. We didn't apply for anything and we didn't need to apply for anything because we had enough money. Without looking for it our funds went up exponentially. [044 – May]

We certainly have done well in terms of financial donations and online shops when people could get a slot we had food being delivered to us. And I think last year, as I was saying, when people were at home more, and I'm talking about people that didn't have any real worries in terms of finance and they were being very generous with their donations. [023 – Judy]

### 7.3 Local Authority Support

Many participants said that their organisations attracted a lot of additional funding from the authorities as well as other sources:

We didn't apply for anything and we didn't need to apply for anything because we had enough money. Without looking for it our funding went up exponentially. We got offered £20,000 from the local authority just as the lockdown was hitting because that's when we always got £20,000, the April every year, and we actually asked them to put it back into their own account... channel it into other groups that we needing the help. So we refused the funding help that we were offered from the council, so we didn't go through any processes. [044 – May]

Many participants also reported that the application process for getting this additional during the Covid-19 lockdowns was so much easier and quicker than it was outside of lockdown:

It's been easier to access because it's been advertised wider. I think historically funding is difficult to come by because you have to seek it out, you have to seek out information, It's not readily available, and I think that's part obviously of fundraising, that's part of the fundraising aspect of working for charities, you have to learn how to negotiate the minefield of finding these places. The council have been brilliant as far as we are concerned, being able to access information, being able to seek out information, and then Social Security Scotland as well providing information on what grants may be available through the national government, so there's been a lot of that. [027 – Mark]

### 7.4 Further supports from collaborators, the community and the authorities

However, there were some participants who explained that: there was little to no funding available; funding could have been more timely; and funding could have been more effectively distributed:

I think the challenge has been that sometimes decisions had to be made on paying free school meals and all that sort of stuff that maybe the council hasn't budgeted for, and we didn't know at that point, was the Scottish Government going to provide the funding?... the Scottish Government could maybe have been faster in confirming funding... But the Scottish Government have sometimes not been as quick to confirm funding but we've still had to put resources in place and deliver stuff. [006 – Andrew]

As time has gone on, I think... yeah, I think there was a lot of money made available before we actually needed it, and then there's still money coming in where the assumption is being made that we're throwing money at it to make it better but it's much bigger than that. [026 – Lucy]

There are also those participants who would have liked other kinds of support including better food provisioning; help with premises; further support services; and personal protection equipment (PPE):

In terms of clients I think we had a lot of people with shielding boxes were getting donated back to us for people that didn't actually need it and the things that were in them were interesting to say the least. The same with the school meal packs that people were getting, or the family packs, I don't know what they were called, but the ones that were going to families and children were different I'll say, I don't think offered the best support. Poor quality, not enough food and things like massive catering size cans of Heinz baked beans, catering size cans of chopped tomatoes, the bread that was in them had a best before date that was out of date but it was fine because they'd frozen it and then gave it back out and said, "You've three days to eat it since it wasn't frozen". [039 – Liz]

Well, it was just at the start of lockdown, probably the city council... you know, they were coordinating everything. You know, they had their emergency helpline and whatever, and we'd been asked to put our names forward for that to see if we had any volunteers that would help, which we did, but it doesn't seem to be coordinated very well to actually give help fast enough and give support. [009 – Anna]

I always felt it was very important that everybody across the region really should have had access to a single telephone number they could call to say I really need some help, ... but then I couldn't get them to go beyond the normal instinct of printing leaflets, and you know what I said was look you know you've got a budget now, you've got funds available, go to the local radio station and buy some adverts but don't make the adverts themselves, let them make the advert for you, they're good at this stuff. [024 – Des]

I don't think we should be doing all that we're doing. I think the fact that the council offices closed down and staff were furloughed, I think the fact that big organisations, staff were furloughed, it's just unbelievable, people couldn't get in touch with people they needed to be in touch with to help sort their situation, so I think that's been a really, really big issue. I think the fact that we're, this isn't just a pandemic issue, I think the fact that we're still employing the use of Universal Credit in the way that we are. We are forcing people into debt and into poverty and into homelessness, and that rests on the local councils and the government's shoulders. I find it a bit galling when the government or the local council you know, pat the churches or pat the volunteers or the community groups on the back to say that what they've done and things, but I feel they rely on us too much. [029 – Julie]

Whilst there was a general acknowledgement that effective collaboration was key to adapting services during the Covid-19 lockdowns, there were participants who felt that the authorities could have done more to promote it through more efficient information sharing.

There were also those participants who felt that the authorities would need to communicate with the emergency food providers and disseminate information to the public more effectively:

Yes, probably, they would need to communicate with the public better. Sometimes the statutory bodies take rather a long time to come up with actually sharing information, not because they want to hold it to themselves, it's just because the cogs take so long to turn to actually get that information out that sometimes everything's over and done with before it even begins. [001 –Tanya]

However, there were those participants who were more pessimistic about the future due to their doubts of being able to cope with demand and the funding from the authorities and the financial donations from the community drying up – see Stewart and Lisa in section 6.3 above.

## 8. Supports required for future lockdowns and school holidays outside of lockdowns

### 8.1 Future Lockdowns

Based on their experience of providing support during the Covid-19 lockdowns, participants were asked what kind of support the authorities should provide to support people, especially FWSAC, should there be a lockdown again in the future. Participants felt that there should be: better welfare and social support:

There were those who felt that people should be provided with greater financial support from the authorities:

I think on a personal level the most vulnerable people haven't received sufficient funds to allow them to come through the lockdown. The food insecurity is as I said before, is so complex, it's not just a case of not having money, but when you don't have money it makes it even more difficult. An extra £20 a week when most of the people that are struggling financially it will only go on their electric and their gas meters that they've got because they're at home all the time, because I know myself we've all got a little bit more cuddly with the Covid way if we're working at home and the fridge is shouting at us and our cupboards and our sweetie drawers are shouting at us. So the kids themselves from all families that we work with, they're bored so they want to eat food and that in itself has been a huge, huge issue for people ... so they've missed out on... because we haven't had many sweets and treats that we could give the families but we've given them nutritious foods. What the government could do is, it's too complex, give them something that's not a one size that fits all, what logistics we're speaking, how do you do it? [013 – Isla]

Yes, definitely, hopefully. We're not very big in handing out the vouchers or extra money and things like that, but maybe some sort of ... I don't know... Like financial support, extra... Yes, financial for food, financial for heating bills, financial for clothing for children. [012 – Sally]

Well they could relieve poverty, that's the first thing; I mean this is consequence of poverty. I think the Scottish government has to... I mean I know a lot... you can blame Westminster for most of it... and the Scottish government does do more for child poverty but it could do a lot more. Well I mean the root cause, tackling poverty, but if they were to make sure that every child got... every family got an adequate income to feed a family properly, feed children properly, they wouldn't be relying on tinned and packet food from the food bank. [038 – Mary]

Others felt that there is a need to provide all families with access to IT to keep them out of food insecurity should there be a lockdown again in future:

So make sure that every young person has an iPad, or whatever, but beyond that it's not just having the physical thing, make sure at their home they are provided with internet access that is not reliant on Pay as You Go, and, or a mobile phone, and however many kids you have in the house, each one of them has access. [023 – Judy]

I know there is a lot of families as well that actually just struggle to actually engage their – or even able to engage in their home-schooling because of lack of IT and technical kind of support. Many of our families and I think most of us take for granted now that everyone has got broadband and internet but even that in itself a lot of people don't have access to – most of our clients, families and single people they don't even have smartphones, basic call phones. If they have a phone at all. So I think kind of technology access to even internet. There are lots of families that don't have that. So, yeah, I think that would be the biggest areas. [018 – Cathy]

You've got the haves who have a good Wi-Fi connection, who have laptops, who have tablets and phones at home, who have the equipment for all the children in the household, who have no issue with keeping a warm home, who might have a garden, who are able to have their kids have that outside space. Then you've got the have nots who are maybe crammed into a council flat which may not even have a garden, which during the first lockdown when it was you may have one hour of prescribed exercise daily is very, very difficult, the kids have nowhere to go and play. They may not have broadband in their house, they may not have a tablet, their only computing facility may be a smartphone, a basic smartphone at that, so the kids are unable to log on. Now I know there has been a roll out of computers and laptops with mobile dongles and things for parents, that's assuming the parents know how to use that and that they can help their kids access it. We've had parents through the door with the laptops trying to get us to set them up and access it because they've never used a computer in their lives. So this is something... I think there's a lot that's going to be taken out of this going forward that'll need to be addressed. [010 –Daisy]

Whilst there was a general acknowledgement that effective collaboration was key to adapting services during the Covid-19 lockdowns, there were participants who felt that the authorities could have done more to promote it:

I think if there was a database or a free charity in your area because for us you can look up stuff, but it doesn't take in everything as well as community activists that you can tap into, so if there was a database that anybody could access that covers everything

from your housing support to where and how you can access the foodbank, that would be really beneficial for the public and the charities. [022 – Ruby]

There were also those participants who felt that the authorities would need to communicate with the emergency food providers and disseminate information to the public more effectively:

I don't know if the government are going to contact agencies. I think research projects like yourself, that helps because you're obviously going to be talking to a range of different people from a range of different organisations. Hopefully when your final report comes out, that is seen by people. The problem is seeing it, reading it and understanding and doing something about it is an entirely different kettle of fish. What I would like to see is more of a discussion, I don't know if further public enquiry that's being talked about will help or hinder that, but I do think there needs to be more direct and written communication and discussion before we get ourselves into trouble again. [045 – Luke]

I think more interaction with the people who are already on the front line. To find out really where are the needs and how would – what are you trying to achieve by giving out the funding? What's the aim and how could that best be met? [041 – Carrie]

Many participants contended that the authorities need to review operations during the COVID 19 lockdowns and take note of the lessons that have been learned to inform practice for future lockdowns:

Yeah, I'm sure at the end of Covid there will be pieces of research about the diversity, government enquiries and what happened, what was good and what was bad, I think that'll come out in the wash in terms of information, how is it going to... Well there's obviously loads of different things that you know, as we were going to be thinking, shielding is an example, why did we do it this way, why is the shielding done differently at Dundee, why is nobody having a dialogue with individual people who are shielding rather than giving them a shielding box every week? [003 – Stewart]

I suppose they could look at what they've done before and not take their eye off the ball on that one and figure out how it went the last time. In terms of supporting us, I suppose it's just keep the communication channels open so that we know what they're doing, and they know what we're doing, so that we can work better together, rather than us doing our own thing and meeting up in the middle, which is what could happen, I suppose. [014 – Frances]

So I think the local authorities need to get to together with the charities as an immediate hot wash up like you would do after emergency planning exercise, after they... to say, "Right, what worked and what really didn't work and what do we need going forward?" and then review, have a cold wash up maybe a couple of months after that and look at that situation and say, "Right, okay, now that everything's calmed down a bit what can we realistically achieve, what could we take out of this that needs enhancing and how can we implement this?" just to alleviate it going to crisis levels on a daily basis, but also to know that we've got the battle blocks set up to address this should anything like this occur again, which it undoubtedly will. [010 – Daisy]

## 8.2 Supporting families during school holidays

To keep FWSAC out of FI during school holidays, based on their experiences of supporting families during the Covid-19 lockdowns, participant advised that the authorities need to provide: greater financial assistance; meal provisioning during school holidays and other support services.

Participants felt that FWSAC would benefit from additional financial support during the school holidays:

Absolutely. Absolutely, the families need support, they need... it's expensive, it's really expensive and the money that... the money people are getting isn't enough, it isn't enough in a pandemic or not. But I think the inequality has spiralled and it's really stark in the borders because there's a lot of wealthy people live here but it makes the poverty seem even worse... the inequality is definitely something that needs addressed and I don't know how it can. Well financial but also education type thing. If everybody's got enough money that's fine, but some people don't know how to spend it or use it properly or wisely or just having the knowledge of what to do with it. [032 – Karen]

I think many of the challenges, the reasons why families found it really challenging having children at home, particularly low income families, the lack of resources which kind of mirror schools holidays as well. You've got the loss of the free school meal, you've got, potentially, the loss of breakfast, after-school care, childcare, additional activities to keep them entertained at home. All of those things are challenges that families often incur around holidays and that was actually something mentioned to us by a few different families. [008 – Laura]

Many participants pointed to the successes of previous holiday activity programmes which included feeding the children involved. This they felt that providing school meals and activity programmes could support FWSAC during the school holidays in the future:

I suppose continue to support the organisations that we set up specifically to look at, you know, the holiday hunger side of things, whatever turn is being used nowadays. And that's the best way because these are charities that are specifically there to support families through school holidays. You know, if the council can help and support them financially or use of premises or whatever I'm not too sure. But, yes, keeping that going would be, obviously, to the benefit of everybody. [034 – Mike]

Obviously, my main focus is the food, so maybe a more consistent and being able to offer that over the school holidays realising that when a pandemic hits, you're not only financially unstable during the school days, that continues on through the school holidays... I think there probably is, especially vulnerable kids and families, if there were more summer programmes for them, places that the kids could go if the schools... if they were able to. I know that the teachers all need holidays as well, but if they were able to have a few times a week somewhere that they could go and get a hot meal and some activities, then that would be great. [022 – Ruby]

More broadly some participants felt that all FWSAC should have access to IT as this is key to keeping them out of food insecurity, particularly during the school holidays:

This is the kind of vacuum in society that's really been highlighted, cruelly highlighted that you know, you see all these wonderful things, Joe Wicks on YouTube, "Oh, you can do these exercises with the kids", well not if you can't access YouTube for the family, you can't really see how to do those. All these learning resources on CBeebies, fantastic if you've got a laptop again and you can access it and you know how to do it and you can work it with your kids. I could rant about this all day, but yeah, for families it's really, really... and in a way it's almost... it should be a wake up call to the whole of society and the government that this disparity needs to be addressed. [010 – Daisy]

In addition to food and financial and IT support, there were those who pointed to the need for a range of social support services:

Well yeah. We've always wanted to continue our homework and our women's group for that reason, for the social support that they offer and being now a parent, I really, yeah I really empathise this idea that suddenly you've got your kids at home and your routine and all of the things that you'd have to do while the kids are school suddenly can't take place. So I think you know it's good to have somewhere to go with your kids or somewhere that provides for childcare activities that keep them entertained and then also yeah like emotional support then for the parents as well. [020 – Jana]

We had a lot of people wanting to give tablets. I know one of our schools got tablets, but without connectivity the tablets were useless. Do you know what I mean? A tablet's a lovely thing, but if you've not got internet access, it means nothing. We had the best part of a whole primary school with no connectivity to start with. Now some of that's slightly changed and I know there are projects out there that are doing bits and pieces, but it's about how we make that for the kids during the school holidays, because even out with the school lessons, connectivity for kids is good: they enjoy it, they can talk to their friends. You know, they can do all of that. [047 – Meg]