

Ending the need for food banks

Trussell's 2026 Scottish Parliament election manifesto



Foreword

No one in Scotland should need to use charitable food aid. In a wealthy nation like Scotland, everyone should be able to afford the essentials. Yet one million people in Scotland face food insecurity, and we continue to see record levels of hunger and hardship in communities across Scotland due to a lack of money¹. Too many people in Scotland need to use a food bank to survive. And this is just the tip of the iceberg.

We have seen some very welcome progress over the course of the current parliament, including the publication of the UK's only action plan to end the need for food banks, a focus on cash-first approaches, and on increasing household incomes, alongside support from the Scottish Government for an Essentials Guarantee in Universal Credit.

But for too many of the people supported by food banks in the Trussell Scotland community, change isn't happening fast enough – or making enough of a difference to their daily lives. We simply haven't seen enough progress.

As we approach the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections, we must reflect on how best to build a future where everyone can afford the essentials. Politicians must be willing to make full use of the powers, resources and levers we have at Holyrood, and ready to work in partnership with the UK Government, to deliver a better, brighter future for people in Scotland facing hunger and hardship.

We believe change is possible.

We believe in a future where no one needs to turn to a food bank.

And we believe that with the political will, we can end the need for food banks in Scotland – and in every nation of the UK.

But if we are to turn the tide on increasing hunger and hardship in Scotland, we must see much bolder and much more urgent action to increase people's incomes both from work and social security and to put an end to the cycle of poverty which traps too many into destitution, destroys life chances, and undermines Scotland's economic success.

We urge all of Scotland's political parties to commit to building a Scotland where everyone can afford the essentials, where every child has a decent start in life, and where charitable food aid is consigned to history, forever.

¹ Trussell, (2025), *Hunger in Scotland*, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/hunger_in_scotland_oct25.pdf

Our building blocks to end the need for food banks in Scotland

Trussell's Manifesto for the 2026 Scottish Parliamentary elections sets out the key changes we need to see in Scotland to build a future where everyone can afford the essentials – and no one needs to use a food bank.

We have identified our policy calls based on the views and experiences of our lived experience partners (*Together for Change Scotland panel*) and food banks in the Trussell community, together with evidence from our own research, including our recent *Hunger in Scotland* report².

We would like to thank all involved in shaping our manifesto for their input. It's simply not right that anyone in a rich nation like Scotland should be left with no option but to access charitable food aid. We must see change. We hope readers of our manifesto will listen to the calls made and commit to taking the bold action needed to end hunger in Scotland by the end of the next parliament in 2031.

It's not right that one million people in Scotland face hunger – but we do have the power to change this. Now is the time to act.

We can end the need for food banks in Scotland, by putting in place the building blocks to ensure everyone has enough money to afford the essentials and can access to the support they need at the right time.

The key **building blocks** to end the need for food banks in Scotland are:

- 1. A supportive social security system.**
- 2. Holistic, tailored advice is accessible for people experiencing hunger and hardship.**
- 3. Safe, secure and affordable housing.**
- 4. Dignified support for people with disabilities and health conditions, including better access to mental health support.**
- 5. Decent, secure and rewarding work.**
- 6. Greater support and value for care and caring.**
- 7. Strong and inclusive communities.**

We have focused our manifesto policy calls in the first four building block areas where we have most expertise, and where we have engaged directly on with our lived experience experts and food banks on the Trussell community. But we must also see concerted action to secure decent, secure and rewarding work, greater support and reward for care, including a childcare system that supports working parents and to build stronger, more inclusive communities.

² Trussell, (2025), *Hunger in Scotland*, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/hunger_in_scotland_oct25.pdf

Ending the need for food banks in Scotland

Trussell's calls for change

Our five key asks of the next Scottish Government

1. **A supportive social security system that ensures everyone in Scotland can afford the essentials**, including by delivering the first steps towards a minimum income guarantee.
2. **Invest in holistic, tailored advice, accessible for people experiencing hunger and hardship** to ensure everyone can get the support they need in the right place and at the right time.
3. **Ensure everyone in Scotland has a safe, secure and affordable home.**
4. **Deliver more dignified support for people with disabilities and health conditions**, including better and more timely access to mental health services.
5. **An updated action plan to end to the need for food banks in Scotland**, fully funded and aligned to Scotland's child poverty targets.

1. A supportive social security system that ensures everyone in Scotland can afford the essentials, including by delivering the first steps towards a minimum income guarantee.

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I have a fear of getting a letter from the benefits agency; scared of them phoning and telling me it is going to change, or the support is gone.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

What needs to change?

Investment in social security is an investment in all our futures and in a fairer Scotland. While some changes need to happen at UK level, the Scottish Parliament does hold significant social security powers, and these must be used in full and at scale to increase incomes through social security.

The focus of the next Scottish Government must be on building a Scotland where everyone can afford the essentials, building a secure foundation for all of us through the delivery of a Minimum Income Guarantee.

We have seen some welcome progress in Scotland in recent years, and we have welcomed the focus on targeted, cash-first solutions to increase household incomes. But change isn't yet fast enough, or at the scale needed to turn the tide on hunger and hardship.

The Scottish Child Payment is an example of an innovative and welcome policy intervention, that ensures targeted cash support for households on the lowest incomes. We also welcome the investment in other Social Security Scotland payments such as Best Start Grants and Best Start Foods. But despite this focus on increasing family incomes, it is still the case that households with children in Scotland are twice as likely to face hunger, so we must do more to invest in a better future for all children.

We urge all political parties to commit to investing further in the Scottish Child Payment over the course of the next parliament, and to explore all options to make this a stand-alone Scottish benefit, as recommended in our Tackling Child Poverty and Destitution research³. But we must also see investment in further major policy shifts, on the same scale as the Scottish Child Payment, including implementing the first steps of the roadmap to a Minimum Income Guarantee, strengthening advice services, and investing in more effective employability support.

However, change isn't just about policy choices. It is also about accessibility, culture and effective delivery. If we are to reduce hunger and hardship in Scotland, we must also see focused action to remove barriers, reduce the complexity in the system, and ensure everyone is able to access the support they are entitled to when they need it.

Right now, the systems in place can be difficult to navigate. An experience that can be both physically and emotionally exhausting. So, it's not surprising many people miss out on the support they are entitled to; this is especially true for disabled people⁴. We must see concerted action to ensure everyone receives the social security income they are eligible for. We estimate this would drive £800 million in annual economic and fiscal benefits for Scotland, lifting 100,000 people out of hunger and hardship⁵.

Because investment in a supportive social security system for Scotland isn't just the right thing to do, it is also vital to Scotland's future economic success. Right now, hunger and hardship cost the Scottish economy £5.6 billion a year⁶. In one of the wealthiest nations in the world, everyone should be able to afford the essentials; yet, right now, low incomes and the design and delivery of our social security system are holding Scotland back.

At UK level we are calling for an Essentials Guarantee in Universal Credit⁷, and we urge all of Scotland's political parties to pledge their support for this change. Here in Scotland, the next Scottish Government should continue the work that has already started, to deliver a Minimum Income Guarantee for all, and commit to implementing the first steps on the roadmap over the next parliament.⁸

Alongside investment in social security, we need a continued focus on reducing the cost of living for people facing hunger and hardship, including extending free travel to people on Universal Credit, cutting the cost of the school day and reforming public debt recovery. Public debt pulls households into poverty and holds them there. We must see targeted action to prevent public debt forcing households to go without the essentials.

³ Trussell, Save the Children & IPPR Scotland (2022), Tackling Child Poverty and Destitution, <https://www.trusselltrust.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2022/03/Scotland-Tackling-Child-Poverty-and-Destitution.pdf>

⁴ Scottish Centre for Social Research (2023), Disability and financial hardship: How disability benefits contribute to the need for food banks in the UK, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/publications/report/disability-and-financial-hardship-how-disability-benefits>

⁵ Trussell (2025), Cost of Hunger and Hardship in Scotland, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/cost_of_hardship_scotland_summary_160525.pdf

⁶ Trussell (2025), Cost of Hunger and Hardship in Scotland, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/cost_of_hardship_scotland_summary_160525.pdf

⁷ <https://www.trussell.org.uk/support-us/guarantee-our-essentials>

⁸ Minimum Income Guarantee Expert Group (2025), *The Minimum Income Guarantee: A Roadmap to Dignity for All*, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/minimum-income-guarantee-roadmap-dignity/>

Access to cash support in a crisis is crucial to reducing the need for a food parcel, and therefore we must see continued and increased investment into local crisis support, including longer term, multi-year funding for the Scottish Welfare Fund. This will ensure it can be more easily and quickly accessed by people who need crisis support, and give local authorities more certainty for budget planning. We would also like to see action to lift No Recourse to Public Funds restrictions where possible, and in such a way that it does not impact on a person's immigration status.

Finally, we must continue to see progress to deliver on the Scottish Government's Good Food Nation target of ensuring that everyone in Scotland can access food that is both nutritious and affordable. One million people in Scotland live in food insecure households, and food banks in the Trussell community across Scotland continue to distribute a record number of food parcels.

This isn't right, and we are clear: this is not a food problem; it is an income problem. We must see bold action and significant progress over the next parliamentary session to turn the tide on hunger and ensure everyone in Scotland can afford food and other essentials.

Our calls to action for the next Scottish Government by 2031

- **Delivery of the first steps on the roadmap to a Minimum Income Guarantee, including:**
 - Increasing the Scottish Child Payment to £55 a week.
 - Introducing a Scottish payment to mitigate the five-week wait for Universal Credit.
 - Working with the UK Government to stop public bodies, such as councils, taking money from people's social security payments that stops them from being able to afford the essentials.
- **Review Adult Disability Payment to ensure all disabled people can afford the essentials and to increase take-up from people eligible.**
- **Reforming the delivery of Scottish Child Payment, by:**
 - exploring all options to shift towards a standalone Scottish benefit
 - ending cliff edges where families lose all support due to small income changes
 - extending eligibility to 16 to 19-year-olds in full-time education.
- **Deliver on the target in the Good Food Nation Act to ensure everyone can access nutritious food, aligning this to the ambition of ending the need for food banks in Scotland.**

- **Continue to take action to reduce the cost of living in Scotland**, including extending free school meals to all eligible for the Scottish Child Payment, and rolling out free bus travel to everyone on Universal Credit.
- **Reform public debt to prevent it trapping households in poverty**, including reform of public debt recovery processes and targeted action to help and support households experiencing hunger and hardship.
- **Take action to reduce complexity in the system and make it easier for people to access support and benefits they are entitled to**, including bringing together local and national payments under one umbrella application system.
- **Significantly increase investment into the Scottish Welfare Fund**, including multi-year funding to give more certainty to local authorities and allow investment in more effective and more accessible delivery.

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I'm not asking for much. I'm just asking for a little bit of help to live the way other people do, to be able to live a decent life.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

2. Invest in holistic, tailored advice, accessible for people experiencing hunger and hardship, to ensure everyone can get the support they need in the right place and at the right time.

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Not everyone with money problems needs help to budget; they simply don't have enough money.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

What needs to change?

Over the past five years, we've been on a journey. We have partnered with advice organisations across the UK to increase access to advice for people needing or at risk of hunger and hardship, and around 90% of our food banks now provide access to targeted advice. By doing so, we have learnt much more about what makes an effective advice service for people in hunger and hardship, and this is a key pillar of ending the need for food banks in Scotland.

Good advice includes crisis support, and services to ensure that people receive all the income they are eligible for. The kinds of change that enable people to move out of hardship include accessing advice or support to increase their income from social security payments, advice and support with debt management, and awareness of and access to wider support available in the community, tailored to the needs of the individual, resulting in improvements in their physical or mental health.

Good advice works, but many people experiencing hunger are not receiving the right formal support at the right time, and aren't aware of where to go. Our research highlights services are not always visible to people who need them most, with over a third (36%) of people not accessing any formal advice or support prior to a food bank referral⁹. As the most substantial driver of hunger in Scotland, insufficient social security payments are exacerbated by an inaccessible system in which people are unaware of what payments they are eligible for, and application forms to receive payments are difficult to navigate without support.

A recent evaluation into the impact of advice services, provided via food banks in the Trussell community, reflected the extent to which people are missing out on vital payments without professional support. Services provided in partnership with food banks helped people to achieve significant financial gains, with more than one in three (37%) people supported receiving additional social security income because of accessing the service, through increasing existing social security payments (10%) or starting to receive social security payments (31%)¹⁰.

We've been working alongside advice organisations within Scotland and across the UK, including Citizens Advice Scotland, to explore how advice organisations, funders and commissioners could work together to enable the advice sector to best support people experiencing or at highest risk hunger and hardship, identifying key principles to take forward.

Our calls to action for the next Scottish Government by 2031

- **Continued recognition and promotion of advice as an essential component of ending the need for food banks in Scotland, including:**
 - Increasing the visibility of advice for people experiencing hunger and hardship.
 - Championing the impact advice has on reducing poverty and demand on other essential services.
 - Funding and supporting programmes which promote career opportunities within the advice sector, and action to ensure advice organisations are effectively resourced to support people experiencing or at risk of hunger and hardship.
- **Investment in accessible advice embedded in the community that prioritises people experiencing hunger and hardship, including:**
 - Providing local government funding to enable multi-channel (including in-person) community-based money advice, welfare benefits advice and access to wider advice and support that prioritises people in hunger and hardship.
 - Advice and support being accessible via trusted spaces, including healthcare settings and schools.
 - Accelerating the Scottish Government action plan to provide long-term, secure funding for advice organisations.
 - Modelling sustainable and inclusive funding practices to enable long-term planning and innovation – including multi-year commissioning, funding core advice services, and co-designing services to meet the needs of people in the community.

- Ending the 'postcode lottery' of the availability of high-quality holistic advice within communities, through strengthening the minimum standards of advice set by Scottish Government to ensure inclusive and accessible services for people in hunger and hardship.
- **Investment in joined-up, holistic advice that improves people's overall circumstances, including:**
 - Investing in models which champion collaboration between advice partners and a 'no wrong door' approach in every community. This must include the required infrastructure to enable effective and meaningful collaboration, including delivery of trusted referral systems that protect data and reduce the need for people to repeat their stories.
 - Continuing to fund and champion programmes combining cash-first initiatives with access to advice for people experiencing – or at high risk of – hunger and hardship.
 - Commissioning services that enable effective holistic advice to be provided for the length and depth people require, with reporting focused on wider outcomes and longer-term impact of advice. This should be co-designed with partners delivering services.

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The entry point for advice cannot always be benefits calculators. We need a more personal and humane method which considers accessibility, digital access, and English not always being the first language.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

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Financial advice, budgeting, and awareness of social security should be in our schools, both as part of the curriculum and for access by parents and carers.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

3. Ensure everyone in Scotland has a safe, secure and affordable home.

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Having a safe and affordable home is the starting point. It all flows from there.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

What needs to change?

Everyone in Scotland should have a safe, warm, and affordable home. Yet we are in the grip of a housing emergency, and this ambition feels a long way off. According to the latest Scottish Government figures, there are over 16,330 households in temporary accommodation, including more than 10,110 children (a record number)¹¹. We face a real danger of homelessness becoming normalised unless we take bold action to end it.

We will not end the need for food banks in Scotland without action to end the housing emergency. At the heart of the housing crisis is the fact that there are simply not enough affordable homes, of the right number or the right type and in the right places, being built. Too many people are unable to pay their rent due to low incomes, and too many are living in overcrowded, insecure and unsafe homes. There is an urgent need to build new social homes across Scotland, in communities where they are most needed.

Social housing should give people on lower incomes the dignity of a safe, secure, and affordable place to live – yet food banks in the Trussell Scotland community are reporting an increasing number of people referred to their services being in temporary and often substandard accommodation. Housing insecurity is a significant experience for people referred to food banks in Scotland, with two fifths (38%) referred either currently homeless or having experience of being made homeless in the 12 months prior to needing to access a food bank¹².

This needs to change. The next Scottish Government must end the housing emergency and commit to building enough new social homes over the course of the next parliament to reduce affordable housing need and end the scandal of tens of thousands of children growing up in temporary accommodation. In the longer term, the Scottish Government must commit to ending all homelessness in Scotland.

¹¹ Shelter Scotland (2025), "Children's experience in temporary accommodation"

¹² Trussell, (2025), Hunger in Scotland, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/hunger_in_scotland_oct25.pdf

As well as building more affordable homes, we must also see a concerted focus on updating housing standards and quality. We are seeing an increasing number of people referred to food banks in the Trussell Scotland community who don't have access to a cooker, a fridge or a space to prepare food. This isn't right. We believe every home in Scotland should have a minimum standard of cooking facilities. This should also be the case for homeless accommodation.

We also need stronger action to ensure more accessible housing for disabled households. Currently many disabled people are in housing that doesn't meet their needs, limits the quality of their lives, and undermines their wellbeing. The Scottish Government should provide additional financial support to enable local authorities to fund adaptions to properties, both council and private, when people become disabled or develop a health condition. There must also be a focus on making all new housing more accessible and easier to adapt.

We also call on the Scottish Government to review its allocation guidance to give more priority to households living in unaffordable private rentals, particularly for families with children. Reducing housing costs for people experiencing hunger and hardship will play an important role in both meeting Scotland's child poverty targets and reducing the need for food banks.

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There should be a commitment from the Scottish Government for accessible housing as a priority for disabled children and their families.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

Our calls to action for the next Scottish Government by 2031

- Commit to delivering enough new social homes to reduce affordable housing need by the end of the next parliament, by delivering a minimum of 15,893 social homes every year over the next five years.
- Improve funding for accessible and adaptable housing across all tenures for disabled people, and work with local authorities to ensure disabled people are prioritised for accessible properties.

- The introduction of a Scotland wide minimum standard of cooking provision in temporary and homeless accommodation.
- Further action to ensure a fair deal for people renting in the private sector – including guaranteeing existing housing rights, more protection for tenants who need to report repairs, and a ban on eviction proceedings until tenants have had access to money advice.
- A 'no wrong door' approach to housing advice and support and action to ensure people at risk of, or experiencing homelessness, can access advice and support to enforce their housing rights.
- Better support to help people stay in their own home when facing financial difficulties, whether private let, social housing or mortgaged, including facilitating the direct payment of rent via the social security system where beneficial for the tenant.
- Working with the UK Government to close the loophole that means families lose Scottish Child Payment when forced into temporary accommodation.
- Ending the use of unsafe and unsuitable temporary accommodation for children.

4. Deliver more dignified support for people with disabilities and health conditions, including better and more timely access to mental health services.

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There's the idea that we are poor wee souls who should stay at home. We are vibrant, active individuals.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

What needs to change

Investing in a supportive social security system for Scotland must have at its heart a commitment to ensuring dignified support for people with disabilities and health conditions. This must include better and more timely access to mental health support, and in community based, preventative services. The current Scottish Government committed to increasing mental health spend to 10% of the NHS budget, but this has still no been delivered. This must change in the next Parliament, to meet the growing need and ensure people get support before they reach crisis point.

Right now, disabled people in Scotland are at increased risk of food insecurity and needing to use a food bank. Food banks in the Trussell community see the impact daily; 75% of people referred are disabled. Mental health conditions are also much more prevalent among people referred to food banks in Scotland; 62% of people referred have a mental health condition¹³.

This isn't right. We must ensure disabled people in Scotland can afford the essentials. Disability support must reflect the fact that many people with disabilities and health conditions face higher inescapable costs and barriers to accessing work. For example, charging a power wheelchair, higher fuel bills, or paying for social care and special diets.

Social Security Scotland's very welcome focus on dignity and respect must go hand in hand with a focus on ensuring disabled people can afford the essentials. Disability support must reflect the higher costs many disabled people face, particularly given that poverty is both a cause and consequence of poor physical or/and mental health. The Scottish Government should also work with the UK Government and with energy suppliers to develop a specific energy tariff for disabled people in Scotland.

¹³ Trussell, (2025), Hunger in Scotland, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-10/hunger_in_scotland_oct25.pdf

We must see a focus on making applications for support easier and more accessible, on ensuring more timely, more consistent decisions, and a reduction in reassessments for people with long term or lifelong conditions. This should include:

- Reducing waiting times from application to first payment.
- An interim payment to support people waiting for assessment.
- A broader ADP criteria with more indefinite awards for people with chronic or life limiting conditions.
- Reviewing interactions between devolved and reserved benefits to end current anomalies which can sometimes leave people worse off.
- A recognition that most people do want to work, but need ongoing and tailored extra support to make this possible.

As well as improving the adequacy and delivery of social security support, the next Scottish Government must significantly increase investment in mental health and addiction support that is upstream, community-based and preventative – and this support should be standardised and available across Scotland. Mental health support should be available where and when people need it; for example, in A&E departments, in schools, and in community spaces.

The Scottish Government should have a statutory role to provide wider support, to people who are disabled or have long-term health conditions, including independent advocacy, to ensure they are connected to the right advice, services and support. This must be consistent across Scotland and backed up by more investment in community link workers and effective social prescribing by the NHS.

The next Scottish Government must take bold action to end the disability employment gap. Too many disabled people are locked out of opportunities. This is a particular issue for younger people, and the Scottish Government must be creative in ensuring every young person in Scotland with a disability is supported to have a sustained and genuinely positive destination. Current employability programmes aren't effective enough to transform outcomes; we must see investment in more targeted, high-quality specialist support, and better collaboration with employers.

Childcare is a major barrier to work, and that is especially the case for disabled households; the next Scottish Government must work alongside disabled parents and carers to increase flexibility and accessibility in our childcare system, and deliver the changes needed to ensure better support to enter, sustain and progress in work.

Finally, we need clearer action to address the stigma around disability and to ensure disabled people are treated fairly and equally. Disability support isn't a failure; it is a human right. The Scottish Government must take a stronger lead in tackling prejudice and changing the culture. Reducing the disability employment gap isn't just the right thing to do; we estimate reducing it by 20% would bring £230 million in economic and fiscal benefits for Scotland, and lift 36,000 people out of hunger and hardship¹⁴.

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Recognition of the additional costs of medical equipment should be embedded within a programme of financial support through Social Security Scotland.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

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We need a young disabled people’s plan, to support them into education, training, or employment.

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Trussell Together for Change panel member

Our calls to action for the next Scottish Government by 2031

- **Increase Scottish Adult Disability Payment** to ensure disabled people can afford the essentials.
- **Review the delivery of Adult Disability Payment, including the application process**, to reflect the recommendations of the recent Independent ADP Review¹⁵ and ensure everyone eligible is receiving support.
- **Increase investment in both child and adult mental health services, addiction services, and community link workers**, to ensure people get the support they need when they need it.
- **A new statutory role for Scottish Government to ensure people who are disabled or have a long-term health condition in Scotland are connected to the right advice, services and support**, wherever they live in Scotland.

¹⁴ Trussell (2025), *Cost of Hunger and Hardship in Scotland*, https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2025-05/cost_of_hardship_scotland_summary_160525.pdf

¹⁵ Scottish Government (2025), *Independent Review of Adult Disability Payment: final report*, Scottish Government, <https://www.gov.scot/publications/independent-review-adult-disability-payment-final-report-summary/pages/1>

- **Take focused action to end the disability employment gap for disabled people, including:**
 - More funded opportunities for disabled people to access paid work and gain experience, together with more support to stay in work.
 - Working with employers to make fair work a reality for disabled people, removing barriers, increasingly flexibility and supporting working arrangements that meet the individual needs of disabled people.
 - Improving support for young disabled people to enter further and higher education and apprenticeships.
- Work with energy suppliers and UK Government to **develop a specific social energy tariff for disabled people who are facing hunger and hardship.**
- **Extend means-tested winter heating assistance to disabled households.**
- **Take action to end the stigma** many disabled people face across society, including using language and approaches that ensure disabled people feel supported and included, and involving disabled people in designing services.

5. An updated action plan to end to the need for food banks, fully funded and aligned to Scotland's child poverty targets.

What needs to change?

Scotland is the only nation in the UK with a plan to end the need for food banks. This is not just an ambition to aspire to, but a goal we must achieve. But if we are to turn the tide on hunger in Scotland and achieve this ambition, we must see more urgent and much bolder action to ensure everyone in Scotland can afford the essentials.

Far too many people are still experiencing food insecurity in Scotland and, despite falling inflation levels, there has been no real progress in reducing the use of charitable food provision. Indeed, we are seeing worrying signs of deepening hardship in some communities, with households in the most deprived areas of Scotland three times as likely to be food insecure as households in the least deprived areas. People need hope that change is possible, that promises of action will lead to progress.

The current Scottish Government action plan to end the need for food banks, *Cash-First - towards ending the need for food banks in Scotland*, ends in June 2026. We already know what works and we know what needs to change. And we know what the building blocks are for a Scotland where everyone can afford the essentials.

We must now keep the momentum going in the next parliament, and couple the ambition and aspiration to end the need for food banks with decisive, scaled-up action to make a demonstrable impact.

As we approach the 2026 Holyrood election, we must see clear, bold, and fully funded plans from all political parties to end hunger in Scotland.

The first Programme for Government in the next Scottish Government should include an updated Scottish Government Action Plan to end the need for food banks.

This must include a more ambitious and fully funded roadmap, aligned to delivery of the 2030 child poverty targets. The updated roadmap must be designed and shaped in partnership with people who have lived experience of food insecurity, who know and understand first-hand what must change to end hunger in Scotland forever.

We are calling on all of Scotland's political parties to include a commitment in their Scottish Parliament manifestos to build a future for Scotland where no one needs to turn to charity to feed themselves or their family.

Change is possible. The cost of hunger and hardship is already too high. The next Scottish Government must act with urgency to end hunger in Scotland and show it is serious about ending the need for food banks, forever.

Calls to action for the next Scottish Government by 2031

- Commit to delivering the next phase of the Scottish Government action plan to end the need for food banks, publishing an updated action plan within the first year of the new Scottish Government, aligned to the 2020/31 child poverty targets and building on the learning of the Cash First pilots.
- Directly involve the food aid sector and people with lived experience of food insecurity in shaping and developing the updated plan and in evaluating its impact.
- Act with urgency across all the seven building block areas we have identified, to deliver the changes we need in social security, housing, employment and advice provision to build a Scotland where everyone can access the support they need, at the right time, and has enough money to afford the essentials.

Trussell Together for Change panel

In developing our manifesto, we have worked alongside our Trussell Scotland lived experience experts, our Together for Change Scotland panel. Our policy recommendations reflect their experience of what needs to change in Scotland – to end the need for food banks, and build a fairer Scotland for everyone.

Top six priorities for change in Scotland

Across all our Building Block areas, our Together for Change Scotland panel identified their six top priorities for change.

1. We need more dignity in social security and services – the next Scottish Government should review people's experiences of accessing benefits and assessments, and this review must be co-led by people with lived experience.
2. We need to build more coordinated support systems across social security, housing, healthcare, focused on working in a more effective way to prevent re-traumatisation, delays, and barriers in accessing rights.
3. We need to increase financial support for disabled people to address the extra costs of living with a disability or health condition, such as adaptions/changes needed in the home and additional support to pay electric bills for those who need to charge wheelchairs or use ventilators.
4. We need to build a social care system fit for purpose, which delivers for those who need it and those who work in it, and provides significant additional investment for local delivery.
5. We need better mental health support, including integrated systems that provide support at the right time and locally.
6. We need a bolder social housing approach that prioritises the most marginalised, and invests in accessing existing empty homes or extending existing homes for families, as well as building new homes.

About Trussell

Trussell is an anti-poverty charity and community of food banks, working together to ensure no one in Scotland needs a food bank to survive, while providing emergency food and practical support for people left without enough money to live on. There are over 130 food bank centres in Scotland, covering 26 out of 32 local authority areas.

We know food banks are not a long-term solution because hunger is not a food problem; it is an income problem. We bring together experiences, evidence and solutions from food banks – and from people who've needed them – to build a compelling case for change.

We will not stop until everybody has enough money for the essentials.

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