Tackling Poverty Locally Online Directory

Dundee Community Food Network

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How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

This document comprises the following sections (click hyperlink to skip to that section)

Dundee Community Food Network

Title	The Dundee Community Food Network (DCFN)
Organisation	Faith in the Community Dundee
Category	Promising
Poverty Impact	Mitigation and Awareness
Introduction to the Project	

The Dundee Community Food Network (DCFN), formed at the start of the Covid-19 pandemic, collaborates with Dundee City Council, 30+ community food projects, Dundee and Angus Foodbank, Alexander Community Development, and Money Advice Services. Guided by dignity and empowerment, the Network facilitates food movement and ensures collaborative, responsive action on food insecurity. This includes strategic planning, volunteer support, and training opportunities, such as Mental Health First Aid. The Network has received recognition through awards like the Outreach Service and Commitment Award for Children and Adolescents (OSCA) Achieving Fairness and Reducing Inequalities, and has been acknowledged at a Civic Reception and DCFN celebration event.

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Initial Idea

Who had the initial idea?
Faith in the Community Dundee (FiCD).
How did the idea for the project come about?
The project was initially developed to provide a coordinated and city-wide response to the Covid-19 pandemic, building on an existing strong network of food projects and partners to ensure people had safe and localised access to both food and support. It has continued to develop in response to the cost-of-living crisis and ongoing food poverty.
Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?
No.
Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project
The key partners of the network helped to develop the idea for DCFN.
Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?
Yes, some of the volunteers involved in delivering the project have lived experience of poverty and some have initially used the project's services before transitioning into volunteer roles. They also help to facilitate consultation with, and gather feedback from, the community directly. The project always values this perspective and ensures that the voices of those who currently and have previously received support are heard and considered in its work.

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Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?			
No		**Yes**	✓

Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the development of the initial idea of the project.	
Which organisation provided funding?	Northwood Charitable Trust and Robertson Trust
How much was required?	£48,000 (for salary costs of Project lead)
What was the specific source of funding? **(e.g., particular grant or policy)**	Robertson Trust Large Grant Northwood Trust

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Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?*)*			
No		**Yes**	✓

Please provide details of the resources that were required when developing the initial idea of the project.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	Development meetings were coordinated by Faith in Community Dundee (2 members of staff) with approx. 40 staff and volunteers from local authority and community projects/services, including Dundee City Council (Chief Executives Department, City Planning, Community Empowerment Team, Council Advice Services and local councillors), Third Sector Interface, community food projects, faith community projects and local support services (incl. mental health and substance use). Subsequently additional staff and volunteers were required in implementation and delivery of the project, including to distribute food.
Facilities / Workspace	Vans were required to collect and deliver food to people in need.
Equipment	PPE required to deliver the project during Covid-19. Shelves and fridges for food storage.
Local Knowledge	Knowledge from each project of who they were supporting in their community, and what they were hearing and seeing on the ground and the needs being presented, was essential in developing targeted and adaptable approaches.
Food and Drink	Food, in particular, was required as it is the main reason this project exists; its main goal is to get fresh fruit and vegetables for those who are struggling to make ends meet.

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What, if any, barriers had to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?

The project mainly struggled with securing consistent resources, as it requires constant efforts to find funding to remain operational. Developing new ways of working was also an obstacle in order to continue to try and attract funding. Volunteer burnout has also been a challenge, as many volunteers have been giving their time for several years. The project is mindful of their well-being and works to ensure their mental health and contributions don't suffer, though this remains a difficult obstacle to overcome at times.

What, if anything, helped enable development of the initial idea of the project?

External training, including REHIS Food Hygiene (with REHIS provided for free by a local partner) and Mental Health First Aid. Subsequently, funding from the NHS was secured to deliver vicarious traumatisation workshops for volunteers. These workshops aimed to help volunteers manage the emotional burden of supporting others through trauma, as well as address any personal trauma they may have been carrying, whether from the impact of Covid-19 or day-to-day life challenges. Additionally, having peer support and peer learning was considered really important towards combating this issue.

How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?

Immediate – as a direct response to Covid-19 and the first lockdown, FiCD facilitated a meeting with local food projects, Dundee City Council, local councillors and other key partners to develop an immediate and coordinated response to ensure food and support were still accessible across the city. This subsequently grew into the DCFN.

Who made the decision to introduce the project?

The Director of FiCD Jacky Close, DCFN Project Lead Daniel Ogierman and community food projects.

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Early Development – Pilot Project or Feasibility Study

Was there a pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	
Yes, a pilot project	✓
Yes, a feasibility study	

What did the pilot study or feasibility study involve?
The pilot project involved a coordinated approach as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. This meant bringing together multiple projects and looking to find ways to tackle the unique challenges that the pandemic brought with it; specifically increased isolation of the most vulnerable and inaccessibility to food and support, with the risk of the poverty gap widening and increasing numbers of people experiencing hardship.

Who was responsible for the design and/or delivery of the pilot or feasibility study?
Daniel Ogierman (project leader)

Were those with lived experience of poverty among those involved in the design or delivery of the pilot project or feasibility study	
No	
Yes	✓
Yes, those with lived experience were very valuable to the project as they wished to consult them on their own personal experience, and what they required in terms of support and needs from the project. The project leader believes it would not have been possible or as successful to deliver this project without this insight.	

Was funding required to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		Yes	✓

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Please provide details of the funding that was used to support the pilot project or feasibility study.	
Which organisation provided funding?	Faith in Community Dundee
How much was required?	Staffing costs for Project leads role
What was the specific source of funding?	Third sector funders (see Initial Idea)

Were specific resources needed to support the pilot project or feasibility study?			
No		**Yes**	✓

Please provide details of the resources that were required for the pilot project or feasibility study.	
Staff/Volunteer Time	Daniel was required to carry out this project as he was the project leader and therefore had to be funded to coordinate the project. Volunteer time is also required for the delivery of the project. Most food projects are volunteer-led and have multi-faceted roles, from food handling to one-to-one support and signposting.
Facilities / Workspace	N/A
Equipment	Logistics support such as vans and food storage buildings / containers.
Local Knowledge	Volunteer lived experience was important to the project in order to get right what support and needs were important to be met.
Food and Drink	Additional extras such as food and refreshments were used during meetings.

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Was the pilot project or feasibility study evaluated?	
No	
Yes	✓

The project conducted its own internal evaluation as it required providing feedback to the charitable funder and Dundee City Council.

As part of the project, the Project Lead worked closely with the community food projects and Dundee City Council (DCC) to secure Covid-19 and cost of living funding from the Council- this was not given as grants but was used by DCC to procure food for the community food projects. The food was then delivered weekly to community food projects. The Project Lead coordinated this and also coordinated feedback and evaluation.

Faith in Community Dundee secured funding from charitable funders to develop and run this project. It was required to report back to the charitable funders on how the project was overall successful in meeting its goals in order to secure future funding. This was and is carried out yearly and is adapted each year based on the findings of the evaluation.

Was there evidence from the pilot project or feasibility study that confirmed that it was working / it would work?	
No	
Yes	✓

Yes, the yearly evaluations by the project alongside Dundee City Council's consistent support and yearly funding from projects help to provide confidence that the project is meeting its aims and objectives on an annual basis. Additionally, by the project having statistical evidence of how many people they helped on a regular basis (8,500-10,000 p/w) there is little doubt that the work by DCFN is doing an amazing job to support those struggling in Dundee.

Who made the decision to continue with the project beyond the pilot or feasibility study?
Faith in Community Dundee, organisationally for the DCFN project lead role, with community food projects, Dundee City Council and other partners continued commitment to partnership working.

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Was the design of the project modified following the pilot project or feasibility study?	
No	✓

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Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

Is there a referral process?	
No	✓
Yes	

Is referral the only way that potential clients are made aware of the project?	
Yes	
No	✓

Other than referral, how do potential clients come to know about the project?
The Faith in the Community Dundee (FiCD) website features a categorised resource bank and a 'Find your nearest food project' interactive map and food provision calendar, updated in consultation with food projects and advice services, to ensure accurate and up to date information about food provision and community advice access across each ward and citywide. The project collaborates with frontline service partners who use and distribute this information to signpost people to relevant support. This includes using DCFN posters with QR codes that link directly to the FiCD website, and these are posted across various venues, including community centres, libraries, food projects, advice services, job centre and GP's and other NHS services, including Ninewells Hospital Advice Centre. Social media is also leveraged to share this information with those in need.

What is the most common way through which users typically access the service?
Other partners, such as social work services, Police Scotland, housing support, and money advice services, help signpost people to the project.

Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to service users?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?	
No	
Yes	✓
Yes, of the some 100+ volunteers involved in delivering the project, approx. 65-70% of those are people with lived experience.	

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or project governance?	
No	✓
Yes	

Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project? *If so, please describe below*.	
No	
Yes	✓
Yes, people with lived experience are involved in other aspects of the project, such as consulting, sharing opinions and contributing to the overall design of the effectiveness of the work carried out by the project. There is also involvement from volunteers with lived experience carrying out roles which involve working on tills, stacking shelves, support work, and triage roles.	

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Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

Who is responsible for managing the project?		
Daniel Ogierman, DCFN Project Lead		

Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?		
	Yes	
	No	✓

The DCFN Project Leads role includes providing one-on-one support for each project, facilitating DCFN meetings, submitting proposals for additional funding from the council and external funders, and preparing presentations to local representatives to secure funding. The role also involves working with a surplus strategy group and ensuring responses to any emerging issues, and revising strategies when necessary. It is a multifaceted position that requires managing a wide range of responsibilities.

The role of the director of FiCD involves managing the DCFN project lead and supporting some of this work directly, including co-facilitating DCFN meetings and delivering funding workshops, with the overall organisational focus on the effective delivery of the three key areas of FiCD's work; Food, Fairness, and Faith.

What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?	
Most of it	✓
About half of it	
Just a small proportion of it	

Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?	
No	
Yes	✓
Dundee City Council Chief Executive's Department, City Planning and Senior Leadership will help provide input and support for the network in order to meet the fairness agenda for the city and city outcomes they require.	

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Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

In your opinion, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

The fairness agenda in Dundee has been shaped by the council and by people with lived experience who are involved in the delivery of the project. Their input has helped to inform the project's focus on dignity and foundational work. The project aligns with the city's goals to reduce child poverty and improve access to services, especially for families and older people. It addresses key issues such as food access, poverty, debt, and social isolation, particularly among families. Additionally, the project implements sustainable, dignified "Cash First" approaches.

In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

The project hosted a workshop with the Poverty Alliance to discuss human rights, specifically the right to food. This was a valuable opportunity to ensure the most appropriate language was used when addressing such an important issue. It also provided a chance to reflect on the tangible impact of the project, confirming that it is meeting key human rights needs and aligning with the council's goals. This helped to reinforce the significance and importance of the work, especially during times when it can be difficult to fully recognise or appreciate the project's impact.

Is the project part of any other strategy?	
Don't know	
No	✓
Yes	

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In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this strategy?	
Don't know	
No	
Yes	✓

Yes, by ensuring access to healthy food, the project also supports national policies like the Good Food Nation Bill. Additionally, the project also benefits from being part of this strategy, and this is evident through the support of the City Plan's aim to reduce social isolation and improve mental health amongst older people. The project also contributes to reducing food waste, in line with the Net Zero plans.

Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?	
No	✓
Yes	

In your opinion, what has been the impact on the project of having this statutory commitment?	
Don't know	
None	
Negative	
Positive	✓

Although not a direct statutory commitment, it has been beneficial to work towards aligning with the city plans to ensure effective outcomes, which strengthen the partnership and future commitment of the local authority in support of the work.

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Funding

Has external funding been secured to support the work?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
Please provide details of the external funding that was used secured to support this work?		
Which organisation provided funding?	Dundee City Council; Robertson Trust and Northwood Charitable Trust	
What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?	Dundee City Council; Robertson Trust and Northwood Charitable Trust	
How much funding was secured?	Dundee City Council funding for food - £500,000 each year (2020-2024); £400,000 (2024-25). Robertson Large Grants & Northwood Trust - £48,000 each year for 3 years (Project Leader)	
For how long has funding been secured?	3 years funded role for project leader, year to year funding for food required to deliver the project.	
Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?		
	Don't know	
	No	
	Yes	✓

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Is future funding from the same external source based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered from this work?		
	No	
	Yes	✓
The funding is dependent on what the council feels they can provide based on the budget they have for that year.		
Has a specific sum been secured from the host organisation to support this work?		
	No	✓
	Yes	
Please provide details of the funding that was used secured from the host organisation to support this work?		
How much funding was secured?	Not specified	
For how long has funding been secured?	Not specified	
Is future funding from the host organisation a possibility?		
	Don't know	
	No	✓
	Yes	
Is future funding from the host organisation based on pre-agreed outcomes or outputs being delivered?		
	No	
	Yes	
Not specified		

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What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?
If the project leader was not funded, it would likely result in some aspects of the work not taking place, or the project's overall effectiveness being significantly reduced. The absence of this funding would also mean the project, along with others, would lack the essential background support typically provided. Additionally, communication breakdowns could potentially occur, in turn affecting coordination and collaboration between partners and stakeholders.

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Staffing and Resources

Do existing staff from the host organisation contribute toward the work of this project as part of their broader work for the organisation?	
No	
Yes	✓

Daniel Ogierman (project leader) and Jacky Close (director of the organisation). There is also crossover with some other staff members, such as the faith communities CLD worker, working with Daniel to support faith groups who want to start a food project. Daniel also works with the fairness coordinator to facilitate consultation with a lived experience group to advise on various aspects of the project delivery.

Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?	
No	✓
Yes	

Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?	
No	
Yes	✓

Additional funding was secured by FiCD to employ 2 new employees:

Cost of living workshops (budget cooking sessions, make and mend sewing sessions), funded by Bank of Scotland Foundation.

Cash First work (training volunteers and staff to 'triage' people to money advice and Scottish Welfare Fund as well as other services), funded by Trussell.

Both of these were developed as a result of feedback from community food projects, and each of them delivered their service within community food projects.

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Are volunteers involved in delivering the project?	
No	
Yes	✓

Volunteers are mostly people with lived experience of poverty who fulfil a variety of roles in the project including as drivers (food pick-ups in the morning), helping to run the larder, stocking up, chefs, servers in a café, project leaders (volunteer support work, recruitment, administration), helping to run fundraisers etc. Some volunteers will choose to fulfil multiple roles, and others perform one role.

Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?			
No	✓	Yes	

Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?	
No	✓
Yes	

Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?	
No	
Yes	✓

FiCD facilitate access to external training, such as Suicide Awareness, REHIS Food Hygiene, De-Escalation, First Aid, Mental Health First Aid and Vicarious Traumatisation. They also provide training directly, including Fit for Funding, and developed Community Guider Training - a dedicated triage role to identify the issues people present with (from financial to mental health and substance use) and help them access the support they need. This also involves safeguarding and maintaining boundaries/confidentiality, and other 'soft' skills such as active listening.

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Monitoring and Evaluation

Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?	
No	
Yes	✓
The organisation produced reports for the funders of the project, which included collecting data as part of the work carried out and researching anecdotes as well as information that the project needed to present to the Council to receive future funding. These are carried out throughout the year with a main report is presented once a year.	

Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?	
Yes	✓
No	

Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project?
Daniel Ogierman (Project Leader)

How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation?
Constantly being monitored through producing internal reports based on user data.

What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project?
The use of collecting hard data, active listening and facilitating conversations which are practised through regular meetings with the Network. The approach varies depending on what is required for the project.

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What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?				
Number of users	Yes	✓	No	
Profile of users	Yes		No	✓
Experience of users	Yes		No	✓
Outcomes for users	Yes		No	✓
Anything else	Yes	✓	No	

The project lead regularly asks community food projects for the demographics of who uses their service, i.e., older people, families, students, etc. This helps target specific resources more effectively.

Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	
Yes	✓

The overall running of the project is always responsive and adapting to the data and direct feedback from the community food projects. This includes developing on the ground and strategic actions relating to sourcing and movement of food stock (including surplus food), responding to increasing demand, working with key partners to deliver training (such as Mental Health First Aid and REHIS Food Hygiene) and long-term sustainability planning. We also respond to the needs of volunteers and staff working on the frontline within their communities, ensuring they have access to resources, training and workshops which can aid their own self-care.

Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?	
No	✓
Yes	

Has the insight from the external organisation's evaluation been used to adapt the way the project works?	
No	✓
Yes	

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Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	✓
Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?	
Don't know / no current plans	
No	
Yes	✓

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Impact

To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?	
Fully met	✓
Making progress toward meeting Aims	
Not making progress	
The project feels that its aims have been fully met due to the data evidence of the number of people it manages to provide healthy fruit and vegetables to on a weekly basis (8000-10000 p/w).	

What difference has the project made?
Providing a safety net and support for those who fall short of the poverty line by giving them access to healthy, fresh food.

Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?	
No	
Yes	✓
Demand has increased over time but is now starting to decline due to changes in the cost of living and post-pandemic conditions.	

Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?	
Yes	✓
No	

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Has the project changed through time?		
	No	
	Yes	✓

What changed	The way the project is delivered.
Why has it changed	Different living conditions fluctuating through different societal issues such as the cost-of-living crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. There is no longer a requirement for certain obstacles and delivery of resources such as PPE or social restrictions like isolation.

Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?		
	No	✓
	Yes	

In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?		
	No	
	Yes	✓

This project strengthens food security while helping individuals stretch their budgets in times of need, especially during emergencies when they might be struggling to make ends meet until their next payday. It also aims to combat the stigma surrounding poverty by being easily accessible within the local community, offering choice of items, offering support to those who may not recognise they are facing financial hardship. Additionally, the project fosters social connection by providing a space for people to engage, reducing isolation, and building a sense of community and belonging. For many, it offers a sense of purpose, giving them a reason to leave the house, attend the community food project, and interact with others.

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Learning from Experience

What is working well?
The relationship between partners which are involved to help deliver the overall project.

What, if anything, is working less well?
Funding and resources as they are constantly required to deliver the project and aren't always guaranteed.

What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?
In this case, learning can be taken from the effectiveness of an independent third sector body to coordinate the work and facilitate cross-sector partnership working and communication. Food poverty in this case is not a singular issue and requires a multi-agency approach, including a shared and fundamental understanding that support provided is localised, accessible and dignified.
The other key learning point is ensuring local voices are heard, and listened to, in a meaningful and practical way. It is essential to work with local people with lived experience, and those on the frontline of delivery of community projects, on an ongoing basis to ensure the responses being developed are adaptable and actually meet the needs on the ground.

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Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?	
No	
Yes	✓

In recognition of the need for future sustainability, FiCD continue to work with food projects to map all provision, assess what support is needed across different provision models and where transitions to other models are possible that continue to meet the needs identified and are locally accessible (e.g. moving from a larder model to community café which requires less funding). There is also the development of a Surplus Food Strategy and distribution model with gleaning, growing and surplus which identifies how and where food currently makes it way in and out of DCFN and where we can increase the sources of food. It also demonstrates how we can reduce and improve food waste. This enables them to respond directly to the DCC City Plan outcome relating to Climate Change and reaching Net Zero carbon emissions by 2045, as well as the Good Food Nation outcome of healthy foods being more affordable to reduce food inequality and for healthy food choices to be more widely available, which can open up other potential funding avenues. FiCD are also working with a subgroup of DCFN projects to facilitate campaigning and advocacy and work towards identifying and tackling the underlying causes of poverty in Dundee to ultimately reduce the need for emergency support. This will be achieved by continuing to support food projects to be a key, trusted point of access to wider support in their community - a 'more than food' approach.

How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?
It could be replicated, but it would be more difficult in an area which has less coverage to help people in comparison to Dundee. Whether and how it could be replicated in more rural settings would need to be evaluated.

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