



**RELIEF
SUPPORT
CHANGE.**



**EDINBURGH
FOOD PROJECT**

**2025-26
ANNUAL REPORT**

At Edinburgh Food Project we believe we can end hunger in Edinburgh. We want to see an Edinburgh without poverty, where everyone has what they need to thrive.

We run food banks across the city, giving relief from hunger and worry for people who simply don't have enough money to live on. Our Money Advice Service supports people to move out of crisis through giving advice on benefits, budgeting and debt. And we work with partners to call for systemic change to end the need for food banks.



Contents

A Message From Our Chief Executive	3
Our Work	4
Relief	6
Support	8
Change	10
Meet Sharon	12
Meet Carolyn	14
Meet Dan	16
Thank You	19
Contact Us	20



A Message From Our Chief Executive

It has been another amazing year for Edinburgh Food Project, and it has been an absolute privilege for me to take up the role of Chief Executive in such a fantastic organisation.

On joining the team in June 2025, it struck me immediately that what we do here is an exceptional example of civic action - people coming together to offer time, food and money because we will not tolerate families going hungry in our communities. Last year, our dedicated volunteers offered a warm welcome, emergency food and a listening ear to over 3,000 households facing hunger and hardship.

We have scaled up our work to tackle the root causes of poverty. Our Money Advice Service supported 1,700 people to access support and maximise their income, helping many people move on from reliance on food banks. With our partners at Trussell, the Poverty Alliance and others, we have campaigned against welfare cuts and worked with policymakers at the City of Edinburgh Council and Scottish Parliament to seek long-term solutions to poverty.

Looking ahead, world events raise fears of a further cost of living crisis, and we anticipate rising demand for emergency food. But we remain committed to our ultimate goal of ending hunger in Edinburgh, and we are thankful for the resilience and dedication shown by our staff and volunteer team, who work tirelessly to support people experiencing poverty.

We are also very grateful to our host building partners, and to the individuals, businesses, community groups, trusts and grant funders whose generosity provides us with the resources to help people in need.

To everyone who has played their part in Edinburgh Food Project this year – thank you.



Laura van der Hoeven
Chief Executive

Our Work

Edinburgh Food Project is an independent charity and part of the Trussell network of food banks. We were established in 2012 as a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

We want to see an Edinburgh without poverty, where everyone has what they need to thrive. We provide emergency food aid, support and advice to people in hardship, while working to address the root causes of poverty.

In 2024 we published a three-year strategy to support our strategic aims:

Relief

To offer dignified immediate relief to people experiencing poverty.

Support

To offer support and advice to people experiencing poverty.

Change

To advocate for societal change.

Over the past year we have continued to work towards the delivery of that strategy.



Relief

Throughout 2025-26 we ran seven food bank centres across North-West, Central and East Edinburgh.



An emergency food parcel contains enough food for three nutritious meals for three days. Our shop-style Hub food bank in Craigmillar continued to offer a choice of items and fresh food in a welcoming setting. Across all centres we also provided other essential items, such as toiletries and household cleaning products.

Following client feedback, we introduced halal food packs, which proved popular, with some centres replacing up to 15% of standard boxes with halal alternatives.

17,870

**food parcels provided,
giving immediate relief
from hunger and worry
in crisis**

**Over the year,
we supported**

3,076

households

The city's ongoing housing emergency meant many of the people we supported were homeless or in temporary accommodation, particularly at our Central Edinburgh centres. We adapted our Grassmarket food parcels for people with limited cooking facilities, and began serving hot food at the Broughton food bank, in partnership with homelessness charity Cyrenians.



“The partnership between Cyrenians Cook School and Edinburgh Food Project has created a meaningful impact for the Cook School volunteers, staff and clients of the food bank alike. Each week, our volunteers are aware that the soup that they are making is going to people in our community who need it the most. That sense of purpose is genuinely transformative.

The partnership has reinforced something we believe strongly at the Cook School - that food is about more than nutrition. It is about dignity, connection and community. The fact that the soup that we make is being received warmly and is making a difference to the people who come through the food bank reminds our whole team why this work matters.”

Community Food Worker, Cyrenians



Support

Our Money Advice Service continued to offer free, impartial and confidential support for people in financial hardship.

People access the service at food bank centres or through a telephone helpline and follow up appointments and casework are tailored to the needs of the client. Casework can include support to claim benefit entitlements, solutions to reduce household debts, advice on managing household budgets, and onward referrals for other specialist support.

We extended this work through a new partnership with East Lothian Foodbank, alongside our established partnerships with North-East and South-East Edinburgh Foodbanks.

We connected people to wider support through an average of 24 monthly drop-in sessions from 12 different partner agencies across our food bank centres. Topics included employability, housing and energy advice. We also held events such as digital inclusion workshops and cooking classes at our Craigmillar Hub.

Securing

£1.4 million
in financial gains

1,700

clients accessed the service in 2025-26

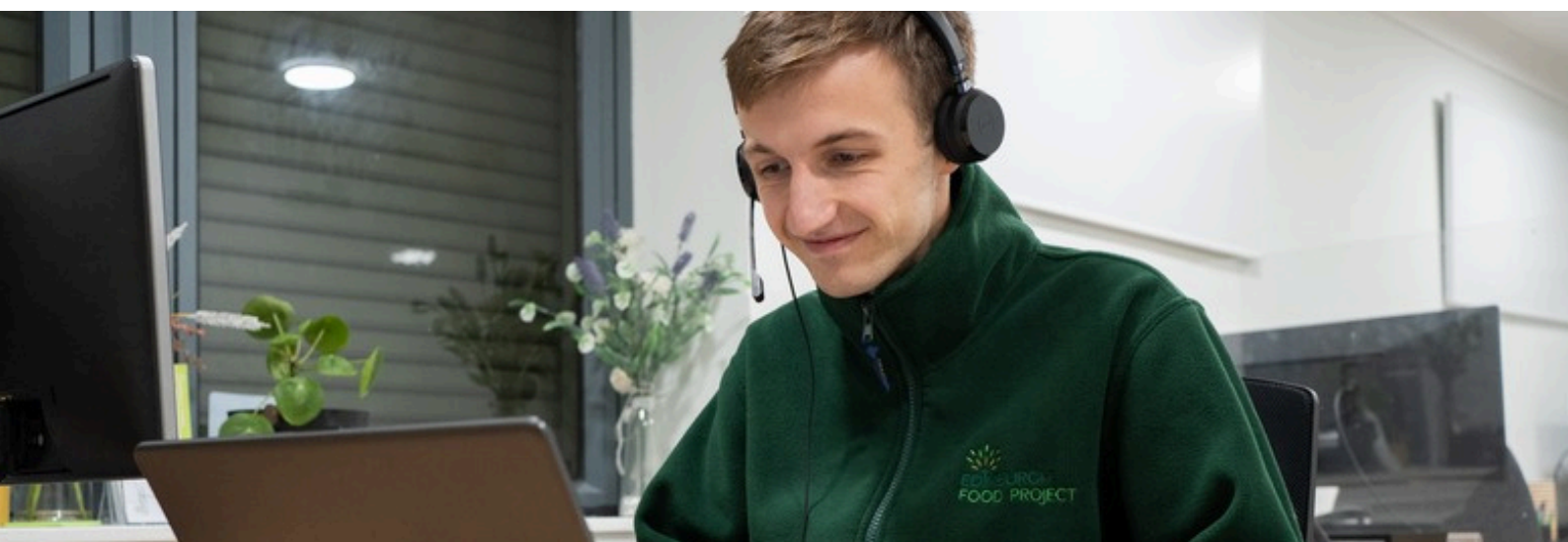
↑68%

increase on the previous year for financial gains

"I'm happy to help out however I can. I've got a few friends who have been or are currently homeless, and the EFP is something they all mentioned as helping a lot... Especially the financial advice and benefits entitlement side, beyond food bank services.

Thank you for all you do, it's essential and I'm not exaggerating when I say that it has saved lives I know personally."

An Edinburgh Food Project supporter



“

*You were instrumental in getting me the help
that I needed to be able to restart my life...*

without your help, I wouldn't have known where to go

”

Money Advice Service client

Change

Food bank use remains widespread because the systems meant to support people in hardship are failing them. We want to change the system to help people move out of poverty for good.

Over the last year we played a leading role in city-wide partnerships, including the East Synergy Group and the Menu For All network, influencing the City of Edinburgh Council's anti-poverty work.

Nationally, we took part in Trussell's Westminster Lobby Day against disability benefit cuts, which helped secure a government rethink, and added our voice to the successful campaigns to end the two-child benefit cap and expand the Scottish Child Payment.

We established a panel of Experts by Experience (people with lived experience of severe poverty) and supported them to share their priorities for change with decision-makers.



The group took part in a round-table discussion during the 2025 Challenge Poverty Week and they helped plan two hustings events ahead of the 2026 Scottish Parliament elections.

Our Referral Pathways project concluded in 2025. This project has transformed the way in which we work with partner agencies, resulting in more appropriate referrals, normalising the provision of wider advice and support alongside food bank referrals, and improving processes to reduce unfulfilled vouchers from 25% to 18%.

In early 2026 we started a new three-year project to create a movement for change and end the widespread need for food banks in our city.

“We want to see a social security system that acts as a safety net for people in crisis - a system that ensures everyone in Scotland can afford the essentials.”

Colin Campbell, Strategic Partnership and Development Lead, Edinburgh Food Project



“

***They need to do more to make sure
people who need help get it.***

”

Sharon, a member of our Experts by Experience group

Meet Sharon



Sharon is a member of our Experts by Experience group, sharing her knowledge of poverty and her priorities for change with decision-makers. She has previously used the food bank, during one of the lowest points in her life.

Sharon had worked a steady job at a bakery until she left to become a full-time carer for her partner John, who had become disabled. *“It was a lot of work. I had to get him up, wash him, dress him, cook all the meals. The doctor’s surgery asked if he wanted a nurse, but he wanted me, and I was happy to do it.”*

John’s health slowly got worse and, two and a half years ago, he passed away. *“He went into hospital two days before Christmas and didn’t come home. I hid myself away... I didn’t want to talk to anybody. I was a mess.”*

On top of the grief, Sharon was plunged into financial uncertainty. Their Universal Credit had been in John’s name, so she had to make a new claim, meaning a five-week wait. She also found herself responsible for John’s debts, with rent arrears putting her flat at risk.

A neighbour persuaded Sharon to go to the Craigmillar Hub food bank. She felt embarrassed to ask for help, but she had no other choice. *“I had to rely on the food bank because Universal Credit left me more than a month without any income. And when I got my Universal Credit, the debt was coming off, so I only got half of what I was entitled to.”*

The food bank ensured Sharon had food and other essentials while the Money Advice Service helped her deal with the debt, funeral costs, and managing her money as a single person.

“It gave me a fresh start. If it wasn’t for you, I probably wouldn’t be here.”

After slowly regaining her confidence, Sharon is now an active member of the Craigmillar community, volunteering regularly and helping others. She has been part of the Experts by Experience group since it started in 2025, visiting the Scottish Parliament and meeting MSPs to tell them how the system lets people down.

“It feels good to put my views across and ask what they are going to do about it. I felt like they listened to me. I know what other people are going through, because I’ve been there myself. I hope that in future, there won’t be so much need for food banks.”



Meet Carolyn

Carolyn has been volunteering with Edinburgh Food Project for six years and has been part of the team at the Craigmillar Hub since it opened in August 2023.

“Food banks should not need to exist in a rich country like this. I’ve lived in lots of different places across the world and I’ve seen people in extreme poverty without a social security system to support them. I’m glad that we have a social security system in this country, but it isn’t doing its job properly. Too many people fall through the cracks.

People come to the food bank for a whole range of reasons. We help and we don’t judge. ‘There but for the grace of God go I’.

We all need to do our bit to help because poverty is everyone’s problem.

As a volunteer, I get satisfaction from making a difference, even in a small way. I believe that if you do these things for others, people will also support you and then they will pass that on to others. I am a believer in a connected society.”



Every single person is important.

Today you might need help,

tomorrow it might be me.



“I’ve been with the Craigmillar food bank since its previous location, at the Bristo Memorial Church. In 2023, Edinburgh Food Project created the Craigmillar Hub within the Thistle Centre of Wellbeing and the food bank moved there. It is a warm, beautiful place with free tea and coffee always on offer.

We now have the space to offer people a more dignified experience, with a choice of food and some fresh fruit and veg. And having everything in one place at the Hub is really good. We have drop-in sessions with advice services, workshops and classes. You can be coming into the Hub for anything; it takes away the stigma of going to a food bank. Not everyone is comfortable in a church setting.

I love the joined-up projects. For example, there are cooking classes that I also volunteer with and it shows people how to eat more healthily and most importantly cheaply. In one of the classes, we were shown that by chopping up veg smaller, it will cook quicker and will save energy. But not everyone attends to learn something new. One man at a class said he mainly came for the chats and socialising. There’s so much social isolation these days, that is just as important.”



Meet Dan

In 2025 Dan took on one of our most daring fundraising challenges. He abseiled 165 feet down the iconic Forth Rail Bridge, raising a total of £1,200 to support Edinburgh Food Project's work.

He had never done anything like this before.

"I came across it in a newsletter. I'm not great with heights and my first thought was no, that sounds terrifying. But then I thought, well, why not? The excitement of it appealed to me. It's meant to be terrifying. That's part of why you fundraise for it."

Raising vital income for Edinburgh Food Project was a strong motivation.



“

Knowing where the money goes

and how valuable it is,

that means a lot to me.

”



“I’ve always wanted to be able to help out. I know the impact the food banks make on people’s lives and I know they need cash to keep up the work they do, to make sure the food parcels have enough food in them.”

He was touched by the support he got when he asked friends and family to sponsor him.

“You’re hoping they’ll say yes and you’re also thinking, I’m just annoying them. But people are very generous. I guess you don’t realise how many people are willing to help. And a lot of the people who donated asked for updates and pictures. They got invested in it.”

On the day, Dan joined the other people fundraising for Edinburgh Food Project at the foot of the bridge.

“The hardest part was letting go of the railing.”

“I didn’t know any of the other people doing it, but there was great camaraderie on the day. The experience was fantastic. A genuine challenge. It was nerve-wracking, being led up onto the bridge and thinking, this is a lot higher than it looked. But the view over the Forth was amazing, and we were all supporting each other. I really enjoyed it on the way down and it felt great when I got to the ground.”

Dan is already planning his next fundraising challenge – running in next year’s Edinburgh Marathon Festival. He encourages anyone thinking of taking part in a challenge event to go for it.

“Just do it! Fundraising for Edinburgh Food Project was a great experience. I felt like the charity really valued what I was doing. And of course, you’re doing it for a very worthwhile cause - food poverty is one of the biggest problems in society today.”



Thank You

We give our sincere thanks to the many people and organisations who supported us in 2025-26. Together, we are helping end hunger in Edinburgh.

To our incredible volunteers - thank you for dedicating so much of your time and energy.
To our partner services - thank you for helping build a strong support network in the city.
To our donors - thank you for your generous donations of food and money this year.
To our fundraisers - thank you for taking on challenges and hosting incredible events.
To our partner supermarkets - thank you for making it easy for people to donate food.

Special thanks are due to the trusts and grant funders whose generous support made our work possible:

The ABC Foundation	The National Lottery Community Fund
Advice UK	Neighbourly
Baillie Gifford	Paracletos
Card Factory Foundation	The Places Foundation
Celtic FC Foundation	The Robertson Trust
City of Edinburgh Council	The Royal Company of Merchants
Community Foundation Ireland	Souter Charitable Trust
Edinburgh Airport Community Fund	The Stafford Trust
Edinburgh and Lothian Trust Fund	Trussell
Foundation Scotland	Tweedie Miller Charitable Trust
James and Jessie Shaw Charitable Trust	Watches of Switzerland Group Foundation
James T Howat Charitable Trust	

Contact Us

If you're interested in finding out more about our work, learning how we can work together or supporting our work, please get in touch:

For general queries or queries related to this report:



12 New Lairdship Yards, Broomhouse Road, Edinburgh EH11 3UY



info@edinburghfoodproject.org



0131 444 0030



www.edinburghfoodproject.org

For volunteering, partnerships and fundraising:



volunteering@edinburghfoodproject.org



fundraising@edinburghfoodproject.org

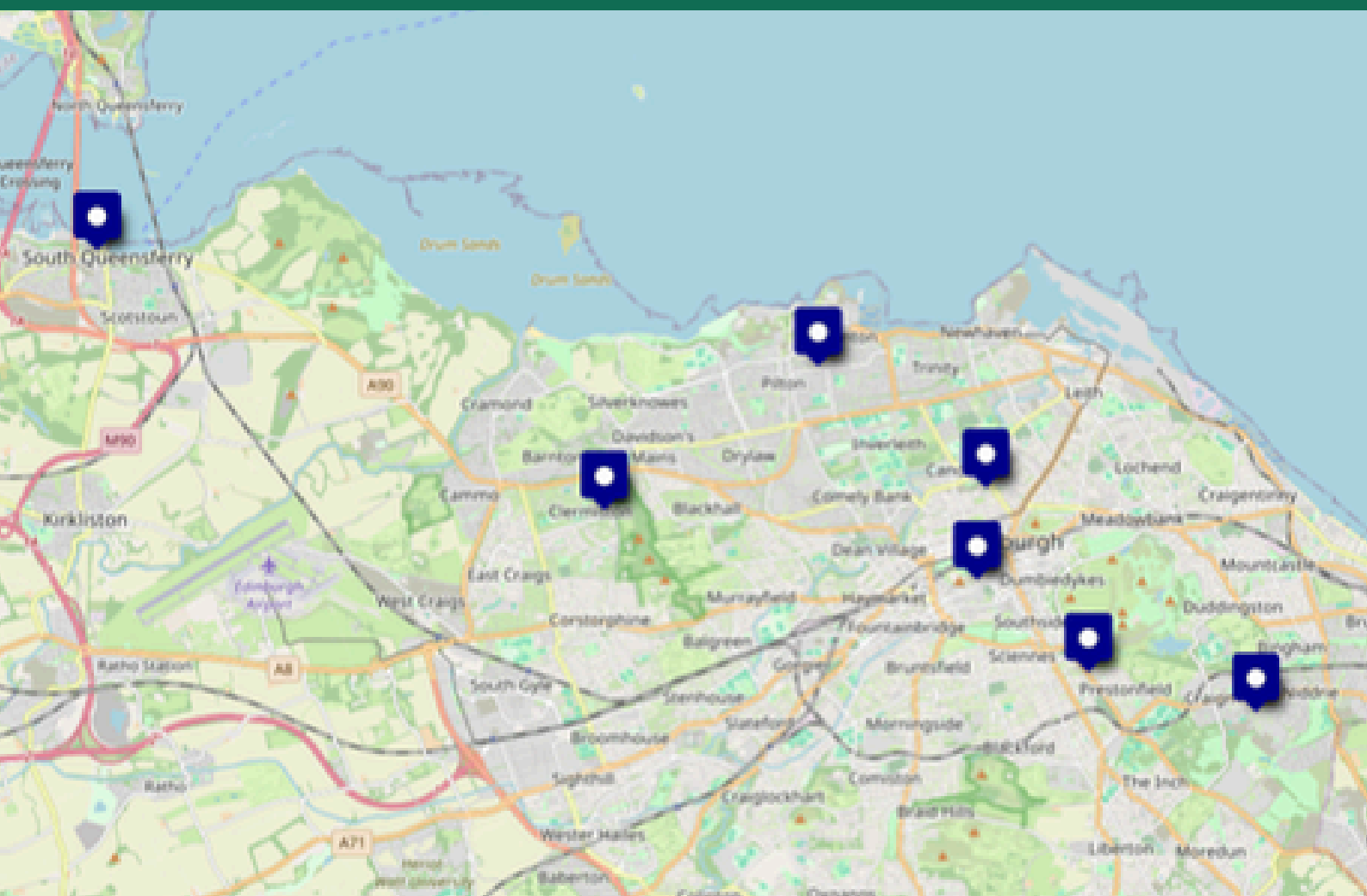
Our social media channels:



@edinfoodproject



@edinburghfoodproject



The location of Edinburgh Food Project's food banks in 2025-26.
Map data from OpenStreetMap openstreetmap.org/copyright

