The food bank with no food

Sunday 23 February 2014

SCOTLAND's biggest food bank has run out of food as the number of poverty-driven Scots turning to food banks for help reaches its highest level ever.

The number of families asking food banks for help in January alone was equal to half the number turning up to food banks in the whole of 2013.

The Trussell Trust, which operates the largest network of food banks in the UK, helped more than 7700 people in Scotland in January.

During 2012-13, a total of 14,318 people were helped by the trust's food banks. It now has 42 in Scotland.

The scale of the poverty crisis led to Scotland biggest food bank closing its doors last week after running out of supplies.

Glasgow City Mission, which normally gives out food parcels to more than 100 people a week, had to turn families away after running low on supplies after high demand.

It will reopen tomorrow after issuing an appeal for help. Schoolchildren in Glasgow have been collecting food to give to the charity to help beat the shortages.

The figures come at a time when the UK Government is under increasing pressure over the impact of its welfare reforms on the poor.

Last week, 27 Church of England bishops attacked delays and punitive sanctions against benefits claimants for creating a "national crisis", while the newly appointed Cardinal Vincent Nichols, the leader of the Roman Catholic Church in England and Wales, labelled the reforms a disgrace for leaving people in "destitution".

Now the Church of Scotland has entered the debate. The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, the Right Reverend Lorna Hood, told the Sunday Herald: "Only very recently I made a visit to a

Glasgow City Mission fundraising manager Graham Steven with food-bank volunteer Liz Brown and empty shelves Photograph: Martin Shields
food bank in Falkirk organised by 10 local churches, I felt proud of their work but angry that it was needed.

"I have no ready answer to an increasing spiral of the benefits bill and it is easy to criticise any proposal from any Government in power. But when you are faced with overwhelming need and hungry children, then surely we have to conclude, 'This is not right,' and try to do whatever we can to alleviate the problem."

Scottish Welfare Minister Margaret Burgess said rising demand for food banks was another reason for Scotland to be independent. "We would have full control of the welfare system. Only then would Scotland have the powers needed to guarantee that our most vulnerable families and groups are protected."

Ewan Gurr, Scotland development officer for the Trussell Trust, said January had been its busiest ever month. It was predicted in December that the trust would have helped 55,000 people by the end of this financial year. He said that figure had already been exceeded, with 55,232 people using a food bank to date.

"If we are providing food to around 7000 people per month, obviously we could be looking at a far bigger number by April," Gurr said.

"You meet the people and you hear their stories and you think this is just fundamentally wrong. It shouldn't be happening."

According to Trussell Trust statistics, 25% of those who used a food bank in Scotland in January cited benefit delays as the reason for referral, while 22% were struggling with a low income. Benefit changes such as sanctions, where money is stopped for failing to stick to the rules, accounted for 17% of referrals. Gurr said Trussell Trust food came from collections in supermarkets and churches, and from individuals. It rejected from the start taking Government funding.

He said: "We have to be absolutely aware that if we are not careful we could just be moulded into the infrastructure of the welfare state and that is just not our intention.

"For us, by working with churches and ultimately with communities, we create sustainable food banks that are not Government or state-reliant.

"It is a crucial thing to avoid ever being assimilated with the welfare state. That is not an acceptable policy shift that we want to see."

There are at least 50 food banks in Scotland. As well as the 42 run by the Trussell Trust, the Salvation Army has seven food banks north of the Border, and many more individual services are being run by church groups and others.

A spokesman for the Salvation Army reported a rise in demand and said it were concerned with the impact of food-bank use on people's health and wellbeing.

"Some people have told us how degrading it is to ask for such help and others say they feel 'stressed' and 'helpless'," he added.

New services are being set up to meet the growing demand. Bob Holman, co-founder of community charity Fare (Family Action in Ringerfield and Easterhouse), said it was hoping to start a service in the Easterhouse area shortly.

He cited the case of a young man suffering from mental health problems who has no money for food after his benefits were stopped for six months when he was sacked from a job. He had been assessed as employable despite his psychiatrist saying he was not fit to work.

Holman said: "There was also a man a few weeks ago who walked from Easterhouse to Gowan to the food bank there and then walked all the way back again with his food. The need is there."

But he said food banks and other initiatives were not the answer to the poverty people are facing.

"This is the elastoplast; we are putting on something which needs a major operation," he said.

 Apex Scotland, a charity which works with ex-offenders and young people and adults at risk, officially launched a new food bank backed by the Trussell Trust in Stravaig on Friday.

GARY Small, service development manager for Apex Scotland in Dumfries and Galloway, said it had been operating since around Christmas and had so far given around 100 people food parcels with enough supplies to last three days.

"We engage with the service user, we bring them in, will speak to them and investigate just exactly what is causing the issue," Small said.

"I think the need for food banks is just a sign of the times at the moment. But I don't want to gauge our success on how many parcels we have given out - I would like it to decrease and decrease."

Oliver De Schutter, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right to food, said the increase in people using food banks in developed countries was a "mark of a system responding rapidly to extra need."

But, he added, it showed that in wealthy countries, many people still "live very close to the edge."


2/11
He said: "Supermarkets can stock all the food in the world, but food poverty will continue unless the poorest are able to access it … without sacrificing other essentials."

Welfare Minister Burgess added: “The UK is already one of the most unequal societies in the developed world, and the Westminster Government’s welfare cuts programme unfairly impacts on some of the most vulnerable members of our society.”

However, the UK Government continues to insist there is “no robust evidence” that welfare reforms are linked to increasing food-bank use.

It declined the Sunday Herald’s request to interview a minister on the issue.

In a statement it said: “The UK Government has taken action to help families with the cost of living, including freezing fuel duty and increasing the tax-free personal allowance to £10,000 which will save a typical taxpayer over £700 and will benefit 2.2 million people in Scotland, while lifting almost a quarter of a million out of tax altogether.

"In fact, our welfare reforms will improve the lives of some of the poorest families in our communities with the Universal Credit making three million households better off, with 300,000 in Scotland alone - the majority of these from the bottom two-fifths of the income scale.”
Jeanne Tomlin - a day ago
This is horrible on all kinds of levels. I have no words...

60 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

gerald singh ➔ Jeanne Tomlin - a day ago
Then shed some tears, Jeanne. That's what I do.
13 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

James McGibbon ➔ gerald singh - 12 hours ago
Crocodile tears mr singh. The Nat's you support could eradicate this yesterday.
▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

Mike Nelson ➔ James McGibbon - 2 hours ago
How and with what? The Barnett formula?
▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

Eoseph Macruairaidh - a day ago
Better Together?
55 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

Kevin Kelly, Wexford, Ireland ➔ Eoseph Macruairaidh - a day ago
The Scottish government deals with Scottish issues. Food banks in Scotland is a Scottish issue.

Why can't the Scottish government feed their own people? I'm sure they could divert some funds from some less important projects to do this.

Could it be that the Scottish government are quite happy for this to happen so that, as you are doing, they can put the blame on others?

Shortly after independence the food banks would magically disappear and the SG could say 'hey, look what we've done!'
4 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

ann mculure ➔ Kevin Kelly, Wexford, Ireland - 18 hours ago
This is by far the most despicable comment I have read in a long time.

You are seriously suggesting that they would allow folk to starve to prove a point.

I will now ignore all comments from you as you have now given up the right to enter this debate

You make these assertions with no evidence whatsoever.

I was going to vote you down for that - oh wait I cant.
25 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share

James McGibbon ➔ ann mculure - 11 hours ago
An excellent comment from Mr K Kelly. Mr Salmond could easily sack all his middle class advisors and feed the people.

The SNP had to concede they had the powers to alleviate the so called bedroom tax.

The rich are getting richer in Scotland thanks to the Tartan SNP Tories.

Unfreeze the council tax and raise taxes from the rich.
1 ▲ | ▼ • Reply • Share
Thomas C Arthur ➔ Kevin Kelly, Wexford, Ireland · 17 hours ago
I don’t think food banks are devolve, pretty sure it’s a reserve issue as the policies that depend on the delivery and growth of food banks depends on the fiscal management at Westminster. In fact if they take their Trident and reimburse the Scottish government, I’m pretty sure it could make a difference. I think it is Westminster government that has a track record in letting people starve.

Meg McLean ➔ Thomas C Arthur · 14 hours ago
Food banks are ALL voluntary and NONE take money from UK Govt.

Greig Craig, Lanarkshire ➔ Kevin Kelly, Wexford, Ireland · 16 hours ago
What is it to you? Are you going to campaign for the Free State to come back under the influence of Westminster?

Patricia Calder, GLASGOW ➔ Kevin Kelly, Wexford, Ireland · 16 hours ago
Social security is controlled by Westminster. Hopefully that will end this September.

Adam Davidson ➔ Eos Phi Macra inaich · a day ago
Exactly my thoughts. In the week Westminster comes to Scotland to tell is how well we do out of the union, our food banks run out of food. I am puzzled why there aren’t riots over this state of affairs?

Ron Greer ➔ Adam Davidson · a day ago
Perhaps the Cabinet will fill up a few ‘doggie bags’ for the poor from their junket lunch?

Robert Peffers ➔ Eos Phi Macra inaich · 19 hours ago
But they are better together. Three Westminster right wing political parties, all headed by the same public school and University, English education, system. None of them ever done an honest days toil in their sheltered and featherbedded lives. They only time they knew hunger was after they got too fat and went on self imposed diets. They are indeed better together. A YES vote will see to it they stay together. (And no, I’m not saying everyone in that social class is the same - just those in that class who have chosen politics as a career.

Andy Wallace ➔ Robert Peffers · 14 hours ago
"None of them ever done an honest days toil in their sheltered and featherbedded lives." - I believe Gideon once did a week's work at Selfridges folding towels. Does that count?

Gavin Williamson · a day ago
Foodbanks? in one of the worlds richest countries
Foodbanks in the 21st century
UKOK?
bettertogether?
aye right

Ron Watson, Irvine · a day ago
Is this Westminster's plan for Scotland............starvation? Lamont will be pleased as it finishes the benefits culture for good.

Derek Harper ➔ Ron Watson, Irvine · a day ago
Perhaps you were not aware that there is a "Scottish government" that sits in Edinburgh. Perhaps they could be blamed instead of the UK government.

Perhaps you also might not be aware that there are food banks in every other European country too - is this the fault of Westminster as well?

Martin Kelly, Newton Mearns ➔ Denk Harper • a day ago
At least the Scottish Government provided help for food banks in a response to the obscene Bedroom Tax (a mechanism created by Westminster in the mistaken belief that somehow all benefits were funding scroungers.)

Joe Curry, Scotland ➔ Martin Kelly, Newton Mearns • a day ago
I just received a 4 page newspaper. through my door on behalf of the SNP, praising themselves as usual. If the cost of this is reflected Scotland-wide, there would be enough money to fill Scotland's food banks.

Martin Kelly, Newton Mearns ➔ Joe Curry, Scotland • a day ago
Perhaps, but they are doing it because some local authorities cannot do it I’d wager. Some definitely are helping and the Scottish Government has at least given them a leg-up

Alan O’Brien, Cumbernauld ➔ Joe Curry, Scotland • a day ago
Really Joe? How much did the leaflet cost and how much does filling Scotland's foodbanks cost?
Betcha don't know, and you just made that up for a dig at the SNP.

Jeanne Tomlin ➔ Alan O’Brien, Cumbernauld • 20 hours ago
So you're saying that Labour doesn't do leaflets? I beg to differ. I got one just a month or so ago--full of lies it was.

Alasdair MacKenzie, Livi Vilge ➔ Joe Curry, Scotland • a day ago
To put the record straight, the newspaper to which Joe Curry refers was paid for wholly by the SNP and YES, and is being delivered by an army of thousands of unpaid volunteers to every household in Scotland. It represents the YES campaign’s opportunity to put forward the truth about the exciting prospects that independence holds out for our country in the face of a relentlessly biased media (with the notable exception of this august journal).

Let's be absolutely clear: it did not divert one single penny of Scottish Government money away from any other spend.

Terry Kelly, renfrewshire ➔ Alasdair MacKenzie, Livi Vilge • a day ago
"YES campaign's opportunity to put forward the truth about the exciting prospects that independence holds out for our country"

I've no idea where the money came from but the paper in question is a paranoid disingenuous rant on behalf of the SNP, nothing else, only a hidebound separatist cretin would give it any credence.
Robin McSporrin, Bristol  ➤  Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire  •  18 hours ago
Is this the level of democratic debate in Renfrewshire
Council Terry, while your constituents starve or freeze?

Patricia Calder, Glasgow  ➤  Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire  •  15 hours ago
Labour for indy have really good leaflets and a very
impressive campaign. Patrick Harvie is an excellent
campaigner as well.
That is the best part of the YES campaign if you are not
impressed by the SNP there are others to choose from.

Alastair Gordon, West Lothian  ➤  Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire  •  15 hours ago
Terry,
Do you think all 'Yes' supporters are cretins?

Meg McLean  ➤  Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire  •  14 hours ago
Hello, hidebound separatist cretin here (in your opinion).
Maybe you should read "Scotland's Future" and think on
what you read. Open mind recommended. Shut mouth
also recommended until you have read it. p.s. I am none of
your definitions above. Do the research pet, there's a good
Tory.

Robert Peffers  ➤  Alastair Mackenzie, Livi Vige  •  18 hours ago
For the simple reason, it was funded by SNP party funds
not from the Scottish Government's funding. Members
and non-members make donations explicitly for such use.

Peter McMahon, Kirkintilloch  ➤  Joe Curry, Scotland  •  a day ago
And how much is costing to have the UK cabinet meet in
Scotland?

Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire  ➤  Peter McMahon, Kirkintilloch  •  a day ago
Or how much to take Salmond's travelling circus around
Scotland continually, when the Scottish cabinet hits the
road Mr. McMahon?.

Adam Davidson  ➤  Joe Curry, Scotland  •  a day ago
That is the most ridiculous comment I have ever read. The
people who donate to the organisations that fund this kind of
publication do so to try and change society for the
better. To suggest they instead fund government cuts that
result in extreme poverty and starvation is childish and not
facing up to the reality of life (and death) for many in our
country.

Ann McIvor  ➤  Joe Curry, Scotland  •  21 hours ago
If it was an SNP paper this will be funded from money
donated by their supporters and if it was a Yes paper this
will also have been funded by supporters.

Many folk who donate to both do so because they have
saved money by cancelling both newspaper subscriptions
and the BBC license fee.
You will probably find that the same people also donate to charity.

You cannot blame the SNP government for poverty in Scotland as they have to use a fixed budget given by WM.

This includes our 8.4% population share plus 0.9% from the Barnett formula, still less than the 9.9% we donate to WM.

This budget will be cut no matter who wins the next UK election and the Barnett formula will be removed. Therefore Scotland will have even less money to spend on its citizens.

15 • Reply • Share

Robert Peffers • Joe Currie, Scotland • 19 hours ago
What rank hypocrisy, Joe. That money is NOT Government money, it is Party Funds and raised by party members and donations. Unlike the many and various reports from Westminster Civil Servants and commissioned reports from so called expert academic groups directly paid for by Westminster with taxpayers money.

8 • Reply • Share

Martin Kelly, Newton Mearns • Joe Currie, Scotland • 18 hours ago
Every political party takes credit for something. How they choose to spend party funds is their business. It's their cozy country, So lomng as they come up with a credible plan to alleviate poverty I will consider voting for them, but the current situation is best described as a national scandal caused by Westminster's spending cuts and benefit purge. They were well warned when they took their decisions three years ago.

4 • Reply • Share

George Paterson • Joe Currie, Scotland • 14 hours ago
Joe, up here in Aberdeen we have food banks, a lot of them in one of the more affluent locations in Scotland. The City Council is run by the largest party, Labour and they announced last week they are going to spend £50,000 to take parents and children down to Parkhead for the match between Aberdeen and Inverness Cally. Now that is a priority need! Eh?

2 • Reply • Share

Mike Nelson • Derek Harper • a day ago
You would have a point if that Scottish Government had the full levers of powers necessary to run a country and failed to use them. But with the bare minimum they have none of them able to raise revenue then its clear where the fault and blame lies so don't go trying to shift it.

35 • Reply • Share

Terry Kelly, renfrewshire • Mike Nelson • a day ago
If Scotland is as strapped for cash as you suggest Mr. Nelson how does Mr. salmond and his personal entourage like piano players and personal chefs manage to spend so much money on themselves. I doubt if they dine in food banks when they are off gallivanting do you?.

2 • Reply • Share

Mike Nelson • Terry Kelly, renfrewshire • 21 hours ago
Scottish politicians live and work under a structure created and imposed by a Westminster Parliament. If you have an objection to the way and manner in which our Politicians use our revenues to live in a comfort many can never hope
to achieve then surely your objections if shared by a
majority of those living and working in Scotland would be
better presented to a Parliament where you would have
100% influence and representation rather than a
Parliament over 400 miles outside of Scotland with a 5%
representation at best and an ear attuned only to the needs
and wants of the City of London and the South East of
England?
13  •  Reply  •  Share

Terry Kelly, renfrewshire ➔ Mike Nelson • 18 hours ago
Your point about what you see as the difficulties presented
by Westminster being 400 miles from Scotland made me
think Mr. Nelson. I noted that one of the world's biggest
cities Los Angeles was 2,675 miles away from one of the
the world's most recognised seats of government
Washington DC, Westminster was an 8 hr drive from
Edinburgh, while LA to Washington was a 1 day 16 hour
drive and London to Edinburgh was one and a half hours
by plane while LA to Washington was four and a half
hours by plane, oh, and there is a time difference of 3
hours while there is no time differences in the UK. It begs
the question does it not, how does the American
government not collapse completely? London is too much
for you at 400 miles away and Washington is OK for Los
Angeles folk at 2,675 miles away. Oh, and I also spoke live
and face to face with my daughter last night who was in
the South of Spain I won't bore you with the time zones
and distances etc. I'm sure you get the gist of what I am
saying.
1  •  Reply  •  Share

Mike Nelson ➔ TerryKelly, renfrewshire • 18 hours ago
But it isn't 2,675 miles OUTSIDE of the USA is it?
Los Angeles is only 1548 miles from Mexico city yet it has
more influence in the seat of Government in Washington
2675 miles away so I fail to see what point you failed to
make regarding distance of Govt relative to Govt within
national borders?
3  •  Reply  •  Share

Terry Kelly, renfrewshire ➔ Mike Nelson • 16 hours ago
You seem to be saying that London being 400 miles away
was an impediment to governing and I think I just showed
that that is a ludicrous position, what did I miss?. Are you
saying that Westminster is in a different country? is that
it? because you realise that would be Ludicrous as well
wouldn't it. You should learn how to lose with a bit more
grace and put a bit more thought in to what you post.
1  •  Reply  •  Share

Patricia Calder, GLASGOW ➔ Terry Kelly, renfrewshire
• 16 hours ago
It would be nice if some of the socialist peers in the House
of Lords could donate perhaps just one days expenses to
the food banks.
You can buy a lot of groceries with the money that a peer
gets just for turning up of a morning.
With them being such strong socialists I thought they
might have done that already.
1  •  Reply  •  Share

Mike Nelson ➔ Terry Kelly, renfrewshire • 2 hours ago
I didn't seem to be saying anything I stated as clear as day
" Scotland would be better presented to a Parliament where
you would have 100% influence and representation rather
than a Parliament over 400 miles outside of Scotland with
a 5% representation"
Of course Westminster is in a different country its on the
other side of the Scottish English NATIONAL border
FROM SCOTLAND.
You never had it to begin with.

Andy Wallace   Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire   14 hours ago
Different systems Terry - the US is federal unlike the UK.

Greig Craig, Lanarkshire   Mike Nelson   16 hours ago
Save yer breath Mr. Nelson, food banks in Scotland are a
price worth paying for Mr Kelly's dream of a global
champagne socialist republic and preservation of the
Union in general.

Jeanne Tomlin   Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire   20 hours ago
Do Cameron and Ian Duncan Smith dine in food banks
while they are off gallivanting? While they are slashing
benefits for the poor and disabled? Does Miliband while he
is off campaigning?
Your hatred of Salmond and the SNP is making you say
absurd things.

Terry Kelly, Renfrewshire   Jeanne Tomlin   17 hours ago
It's called trading insults Ms. Tomlin all the finest political
types do it. And if I may so say you are showing distinct
promise at it for a novice.