

Jane Hutt AS/MS
Ysgrifennydd y Cabinet dros Gyfiawnder Cymdeithasol, y
Trefnydd a'r Prif Chwip
Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, Trefnydd and Chief Whip



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

Ein cyf/Our ref JH/PO/143/26

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
CF99 1NA

18 March 2026

Dear Jenny,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to provide oral evidence on 2 March 2026 as part of the Equality and Social Justice Committee's inquiry into healthy, nutritious and affordable food.

During the session, I agreed to provide the Committee with further information regarding the monitoring the Welsh Government undertakes for funding for tackling food poverty – which is distributed on Welsh Government's behalf by the Welsh Local Government Association.

Each quarter, the funding for Emergency Food Aid, Local Food Partnerships and Welcome Spaces is monitored to see how the local authorities and food partnerships are meeting the objectives and this also provides an opportunity to look for ways in which we can build on what they are already doing and share practice.

Emergency Food Aid funding

The provision of Emergency Food Aid support remains a key part of the Welsh Government's response to the ongoing increase in the cost-of-living faced by our communities and is making a real difference to those struggling with affording the cost of food. While the funding is focused on short-term, crisis funding this funding is also being used to strengthen existing community food initiatives across each authority such as supporting food pantries and co-ops, providing cookery and nutrition classes to families and supporting community growing projects.

Bae Caerdydd • Cardiff Bay
Caerdydd • Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Canolfan Cyswllt Cyntaf / First Point of Contact Centre:
0300 0604400

Gohebiaeth.Jane.Hutt@llyw.cymru
[@gov.wales](https://twitter.com/Correspondence.Jane.Hutt)

Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

As part of the funding conditions, on a quarterly basis Welsh Government asks for evidence from each local authority that:

- the capital funding has supported organisations to build their capacity to provide good quality, nutritious food to their customers. For example, but not limited to, purchasing fridges, freezers, cooking equipment, equipment which supports the development of local food growing and distribution initiatives.
- the revenue funding has supported community food organisations to purchase additional supplies of good quality food and essential goods, boosting their capacity to meet the needs of their customers; evidence that organisations have taken steps to ensure provision for those that are hard to reach and also ensured the provision of food that meets the diverse requirements of the community.
- funding has been used to support Local Food Partnerships and community organisations to support food related projects linked to the work of the local food partnerships, including those that help tackle the root causes of food poverty.

In the latest quarterly reporting, one local authority reported the following:

“Funding supported cooking equipment, food storage, refill-pantry supplies, and food-growing projects in schools and community groups. Most grants included food purchases, prioritising local, healthy, non-UPF produce. Several projects used the funding to deliver cookery classes, community meals, youth cooking sessions, and innovative outreach to hard-to-reach groups. Schools expanded growing areas and food education, with one preparing to supply its own vegetables for school meals. The Local Food Partnership widened collaboration, adding all grant recipients to the network and donated 50 Christmas hampers to vulnerable young people. New partnerships have been formed with mental-health cafés, Welsh-medium schools, and youth projects.”

Local Food Partnership funding

Funding for the Local Food Partnerships has a medium to longer term focus and is supporting the co-ordination of on the ground, food-related activity, drawing in a variety of expertise from local authorities and other services such as Public Health Wales, Local Health Boards, public sector bodies, third sector organisations, businesses and academic institutions as well as local organisations such as housing associations and advice services.

As part of the funding conditions, on a quarterly basis Welsh Government asks for evidence from each of the Local Food Partnerships that they are:

- Establishing and leading a broad and dynamic local food partnership network, which is representative of the communities they are supporting (Leadership and joined-up strategic thinking)
- Providing leadership and coordination for local food activity towards embedding a new resilience in the local food system (Local Food System Action & Coordination)
- Addressing the fundamental societal need for tackling food poverty and for supporting household food security across all citizens within the local community, including for those with protected characteristics (Strengthening Community Food Resilience)
- Raising the capacity and diversity of local food supply to satisfy local food demand (Stronger/Diverse Local Food Systems)

In the latest quarterly reporting, one food partnership reported the following:

“We are developing a pilot with guidance from the local authority and steering group which will see the launch of a Fresh Produce Voucher. This pilot will strengthen community food resilience by improving access to affordable, healthy fruit and vegetables for low-income households—particularly those identified through local authority social care networks—and supporting households facing food insecurity, including people with protected characteristics. Through a voucher scheme redeemable at local markets and market gardens, the project will boost the availability and consumption of nutritious food while promoting awareness of sustainable, locally produced options across the community, including in education settings. Alongside this, the scheme will encourage engagement in social and community food activities and enhance income-maximising support by signposting families to programmes such as Universal Primary Free School Meals, Food and Fun, and Healthy Start. By supporting local producers, fostering market participation, and embedding community-led preventative action, the pilot will contribute to a more resilient, equitable local food system.”

Warm Welcome Spaces

In addition to supporting Emergency Food and Local Food Partnerships, our funding for Safe and Warm Hubs supports welcoming spaces, often with a hot meal or access to food during their attendance. Hubs are places where people of all ages can meet, access advice, stay warm, and connect with others in their local community. Over 800 warm spaces across Wales are being supported in this way.

As part of the funding conditions, on a quarterly basis Welsh Government asks for evidence from local authorities on the number of warm spaces, their location, the number of individuals supported, and a narrative on the type of activity / support provided.

In the latest quarterly reporting, one local authority reported the following:

“Warm spaces provide free refreshments, meals and snacks. Further enrichment activities such as cost-of-living support, games, puzzles, toddler groups, exercise, crafts, community cinema, book clubs, shower & laundry facilities. Advice and support services such as digital inclusion, job support, cost of living support, mental health support and housing support have also taken place in the warm spaces”.

Cross Government Food Support

It is important to recognise that there are many other examples across Welsh Government of how we support community food.

Welsh Government has been working in partnership with FareShare Cymru since 2015 to fight food poverty by tackling food waste, investing £3.9m. With support from Resource Efficiency & Circular Economy within the Climate Change and Rural Affairs portfolio, FareShare Cymru take food that would otherwise be wasted and redistributes it to community organisations in Wales that feed people in need. This work greatly benefits the circular economy and strengthens the food supply chain. Many food banks and community kitchens are supplied by FareShare which helps those in need by addressing food poverty, supporting the homeless, and fostering a sense of community through shared meals.

For example, FareShare Cymru have provided a pop-up kitchen to Bridgend Community Outreach Centre (BARC) who provide practical and emotional assistance to people facing homelessness, poverty and isolation. BARC has now dramatically increased its capacity to serve hot, nutritious meals. Previously staff could only prepare sandwiches or small portions of porridge, limiting the number of clients who could be fed and the variety of meals offered. However now the centre can serve hot lunches to up to 60 people at a time.

The Community Facilities Programme has supported many organisations that provide vital services to their communities, including food banks and food clubs. One example is St Mark's Church in Wrexham, which runs the Caia Food Club. The club is open to everyone, with no barriers to attending, and offers a supply of food and essential items to anyone who needs them. During opening hours, visitors can browse a small shop area and choose items to help stock their cupboards, with availability depending on recent donations. A voluntary £3 contribution is suggested to help sustain the service and extend its reach within the community.

Funding for Local Food Partnerships from the Climate Change and Rural Affairs portfolio is supporting a collaborative project in North Wales which aims to create a robust, regionally coordinated supply chain for fresh and frozen local vegetables for use across Ynys Mon, Gwynedd, Conwy & Denbighshire, through local authority school catering, care and hospitality sectors across all four local authorities.

Each of these initiatives have their own monitoring arrangements in place to ensure effective use of the funding being provided and officials across Welsh Government are in regular contact with each other to share interdependencies and how the funding is being used.

I hope this demonstrates the monitoring Welsh Government undertakes on our funding of community food initiatives and how monitoring and working with partners helps ensure the support is being directed appropriately.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Hutt". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the top.

Jane Hutt AS/MS

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