Dear Everyone

As many of you will know Philip Alston, the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, visited the UK in November. Several IFAN member organisations were represented at a special meeting at Bristol University on the challenges of rural poverty. This session was referred to in the Special Rapporteur's report and Tracy Olin of PATCH, Imran Hameed of the Salma Food Bank and Sam Gilchrist of the West Northumberland Food Bank all gave powerful evidence. We are grateful to Dr Tomaso Ferrando for his invitations and for organising the session.

This week we convened a first conference call discussion on the challenges being faced by food aid providers working in rural communities with a view to sharing ideas and best practice and developing a plan for a conference in the Spring or Summer of 2018. Please let me know if you’d be interested in getting involved with further discussions and planning a series of workshops as part of a conference on rural food poverty - ifan.uk@gmail.com.

Photo: Sam Gilchrist of the West Northumberland Food Bank, Tracy Olin of PATCH and Imran Hameed of the Salma Food Bank give evidence to the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. Photo by Bassam Khawaja.
IFAN has joined forces with A Menu for Change to collect data on independent food parcel distribution across Scotland. By now, 75% of all independent food bank venues in Scotland are involved with the project. At the end of November, Scottish independent food bank representatives came together at meetings we held in Edinburgh and Glasgow to share experiences and discuss the practicalities of data collection.

We know that Trussell Trust foodbanks represent around 56% of the Scottish food bank picture and gave out 170,625 parcels to adults and children from April 2017 to April 2018. However, the extent of the number of parcels given out through the independent sector, and the remaining 44% of the food bank picture, is unknown. We’ll soon be able to release data on the number of parcels distributed and the number of adults and children helped by independent food banks and food parcel distributors.

Independent food banks and food parcel distributors who were represented at our meetings in Glasgow and Edinburgh included the Storehouse Food Bank, Govan Community Project, East Kilbride Community Food Bank, Helensburgh and Lomond Food Bank, Hope Kitchen, Coatbridge Community Foodbank, Central and West Integration Network, Basics Bank, Kirkcaldy Foodbank, Berwickshire Churches Food Bank, Broke not Broken, Storehouse Bo’ness, Instant Neighbour, Galashiels Area Food Bank, Jedburgh Churches Food Bank and Basics Banks, Edinburgh City Mission.

You can find out more about the project as well as see a map including all the organisations participating so far here.

Early in November, our trustee Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite ran a conference in Birmingham on Charitable food aid provision as an emergency response: sharing evidence from Canada, the USA and the UK. We were honoured to hear from Professor Jan Poppendieck, Professor Graham Riches, Professor Mariana Chilton, Dr Elaine Power, Andy Fisher and Alison Cohen who travelled over from the United States and Canada for the 2-day event as well as numerous early career researchers and campaigners. The conference was followed by a roundtable discussion in London involving key representatives of the organisations working within the UK Food Poverty Alliance and the North American delegation. A summary of this discussion is likely to be available online soon.

Photo: Professor Jan Poppendieck, Professor Graham Riches, Professor Mariana Chilton, Dr Elaine Power, Andy Fisher, Dr Kayleigh Garthwaite and Alison Cohen.
Also in November, I was kindly invited by Chrissie Pepler of the Hereford Diocese to discuss IFAN’s work with independent food bank managers and coordinators working in Herefordshire and Shropshire. It was really valuable indeed to hear from representatives of the Ludlow Food Bank, the Bridgnorth Food Bank, the Church Stretton Food Bank, the Hereford Food Bank, the Leominster Food Bank and the Ledbury Food Bank about immediate concerns and ways of coping with increased demand across rural communities as well as their hopes for not being needed in the future. It was also very good to hear about the work of the Shrewsbury Food Hub from Emily Fay and from representatives of the hot meal providers operating across Hereford.

At the end of November Dr Nicola Livingstone and Dr Joe Penny launched findings on their research into food aid provisioning in Glasgow, London and Belfast. You can read more in their blog for IFAN [here](https://www.ifan.org.uk/innovation/2021/12/22/glasgow-london-belfast/).

Do let us know if you would like to more about any of the above via ifan.uk@gmail.com.

Thanks a lot and best wishes, Sabine.