

Assynt Resilience Group

The Assynt Resilience group was set up from existing groups and charities in the Lochinver Assynt area. We came together at the start of the Covid Pandemic 2020 to assist the local people of Assynt who were suffering hardship due to B&B's and hotels closing due to Covid restrictions, local seasonal work not coming online after winter again due to Covid restrictions and the lockdown period. Also because of the lack of work in the area for local people again due to lockdown restrictions. Lochinver and the surrounding area is a place of natural beauty and highland area known its scenery, walking, fishing and peaceful relaxing environment. Although some visitors did come initially these were short lived and the need for a food bank was pretty quick to emerge.

Cfine Fareshare was set up and a food bank was set up in the local leisure centre, this had to soon move and it was installed in a room at the village hall. Through joining forces with Kinlochbervie food bank we are able to coordinate food collections from Dornoch. This worked ok but was restricted to when drivers were able to get across the country to collect it. It a fare while to get deliveries to Kinlochbervie and now finally to Lochinver itself. We have been delivering food out to clients since the food ban opened and continue to do so.

We are still in the village hall in 2021 and are still providing food bags of both fresh, tinned, dried goods to appreciative locals. We have had a several new people who have come online due to the continued covid restriction and lack of working opportunities in the area. See images below of food available.



Food bank in the village hall



Fresh food in the village hall

Food bank images from Lochinver



There is a purpose built food larder in Lochinver by the Lesure Centre. It is now close to completion and will be open to any person requiring food in he Lochinver area. It will have timelock on so it will be closed for certain time periods. We will continue to work with Cfine but will extecd our range to include frozen and chilled goods in 2 new dedicated fridge and freezer.



New Lochinver shed interior



New Lochinver Food Larder

Food bank stories:

“Food bank has been a lifeline, lack of income and price of food in the local shops has made it hard at times. Having the food bank deliveries of both fresh, dry and tinned items has been very needed. When you rely on the tourist trade to make a living having it swept away for a long period and after a hard winter took its toll on our finances. Knowing there was someone there to ask for help was good but not always easy to do” (Food Bank Recipient A)

“having a family to feed is hard enough but when they are around all the time my food bill was doubled. Not having my job in bar cooking left us in desperate need at time and with 3 young children lockdown in the Pandemic has been really hard.

Knowing there was someone at the end of a telephone line and who wanted to help and didn't judge made asking a little easier" (Family B).

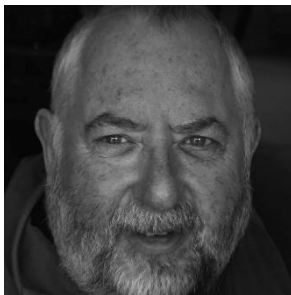
"Food parcels from the Assynt Resilience Group have been a massive help in this single parent household during the pandemic. Especially as it can get very costly buying all food locally it really helped to relieve this" (Family C).

"The financial pressures we've faced this last year have been immense and the support from ARG means our house is warm again and the food bank has massively reduced our food bill stopping us sinking into more debt. We're really grateful for all the help" (Family D).

"Prior to reaching out to the Assynt Resilience Group, I was quite apprehensive as living in such a small community, I was concerned that everyone might know that I was struggling and asking for help. I need not have worried. It's been weeks now, and still, nobody knows! The process of getting in touch was really simple and easy and the response times were almost instantaneous. There was absolutely no judgement - purely support - even when I cried! I have received support in terms of food, fuel and electricity, and even more valuable, moral support and a safe space. I'd previously exhausted all other sources of support and I don't know what I'd have done without ARG's support. It is an invaluable resource, not only in times of pandemic but necessary all of the time"

Future of Food Bank

As can be seen from above the food bank will continue to be open in Lochinver but will not be delivered to your door. Instead, it will operate from a food larder by the local leisure centre and will be open to the public on a daily basis. Here they can access food and also drop off food or other goods to be passed on to the public. The food larder is still under construction but should be open in April 2021. A new group is looking to be a part of running the food larder and the ARG can take a step back to look at other projects.



William Smith

ARG Food Representative

