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£750,000 FOR FOODBANKS AS USE COULD REACH RECORD LEVELS OVER CHRISTMAS

Leading foodbank charity The Trussell Trust is receiving £748,423 from the Big Lottery Fund as it prepares for what is likely to be record levels of demand over the festive period with people on low incomes facing choices between eating and heating.

The funding will enable the charity to increase support to their network of foodbanks across England which provide emergency food and support to people in crisis who have been referred by professionals including health visitors, welfare advisors, staff at refuges and social workers.

It will help Trussell Trust foodbanks to provide extra services ranging from debt, money management, welfare and housing advice to courses on cooking on a budget. The charity's More Than Food programme helps address the root causes of crisis by offering people access to advice, training and support alongside emergency food. The funding will help the charity to set up partnerships with local and national advice agencies to facilitate support sessions at foodbanks. Qualified advisors will be able to deal with an issue on the spot, helping to make sure that a crisis does not escalate further and that people at the point of crisis are helped back onto their feet quickly.

The Trussell Trust is also working with Npower to pilot 'fuel banks' which give prepayment meter top ups for people struggling afford energy as well as food. This will be the first winter that fuel banks have been operating.

The use of foodbanks is currently at record levels. Between April and September 2015 Trussell Trust foodbanks across the UK gave 506,369 three day emergency food supplies to people compared to 492,641 in the same period last year. And in December 2014 referrals to foodbanks were 53 per cent higher than the average across other months, with more than 130,000 three day food supplies being given to people in just one month. The charity fears this winter could be their busiest ever.

Trussell Trust CEO David McAuley, said: "Winter is the hardest time of year for people living on the breadline; many will face stark choices between eating and heating. Every year we meet families who are worried about having anything to eat on Christmas Day, who have been living

and sleeping in one room to keep heating costs to the absolute minimum. Foodbank use is likely to rise significantly over the winter months and we're anticipating that it could peak at the highest level yet this Christmas. Increasingly, Trussell Trust foodbanks are able to provide additional support services to help resolve some of the underlying causes of foodbank use, and this will be especially impactful over the winter months. We are incredibly grateful to the Big Lottery Fund for their generous support in enabling foodbanks to help families and individuals at the point of crisis to get back onto their feet more quickly. The funding couldn't come at a better time."

Already, foodbanks are helping families in crisis in the lead up to Christmas. Last week a single mum cried tears of joy and relief when a London foodbank gave her Christmas presents for her children, as well as emergency food and advice.

Louise (not her real name) said "Christmas makes it so much worse when you have no money. My kids love Christmas, and I do too, but this year I can't wait for it to be over. It's so hard seeing all the adverts and knowing I can't afford to celebrate. I was stunned when the foodbank gave me presents, it was so special, I didn't expect it. It will make Christmas a little bit easier, I do thank them."

Lyn Cole, Big Lottery Fund, England Grant Making Director, said: "As Christmas approaches and most families look forward to exchanging presents and enjoying a turkey meal in the comforts of a warm home, unfortunately many people will be struggling simply to make ends meet. Our award to the Trussell Trust will help communities across England by not only providing access to emergency food relief but also advice on debt, welfare, housing and food preparation to help prevent repeated use of foodbanks."

Website: www.biglotteryfund.org.uk
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Notes to Editors:

- The Big Lottery Fund supports the aspirations of people who want to make life better for their communities across the UK. We are responsible for giving out 40% of the money raised

by the National Lottery and invest over £650 million a year in projects big and small in health, education, environment and charitable purposes.

- Since June 2004 we have awarded over £8 billion to projects that change the lives of millions of people. Every year we fund 13,000 small local projects tackling big social problems like poor mental health and homelessness.
- Since the National Lottery began in 1994, £34 billion has been raised and more than 450,000 grants awarded.
- Trussell Trust foodbanks provide three days' nutritionally balanced food and support to people in crisis in the UK. In 2014-15, 1,084,604 three day emergency food supplies were provided to people in crisis. Almost 400,000 of these went to children.
- Everyone who comes to a Trussell Trust foodbank is referred by a frontline professional like CAB, housing associations and children's centres. Over 30,000 professionals refer to foodbanks in the UK.
- Over 90% of food given out is donated by the public and over 30,000 people volunteer at Trussell Trust foodbanks across the UK.
- The Trussell Trust runs the biggest network of foodbanks in the UK. For more on The Trussell Trust visit www.trusselltrust.org