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‘Don’t ignore the hunger on our doorstep’ UK foodbank charity warns ahead of Olympic Hunger Summit

As David Cameron uses the Olympics to put a spotlight on global hunger this weekend, foodbank charity The Trussell Trust warns that we should not ignore the hunger on our own doorstep. Four new UK foodbanks are being launched by the charity every week to cope with the increased demand for emergency food from Britons. Since April 2012 alone, Trussell Trust foodbanks have given emergency food to over 50,000 people nationwide, one third of which were children.



“A mother leaves Tower Hamlets foodbank with three days emergency food

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‘David Cameron is right that millions of people across the world are not excited about the Olympics because they are worried about where their next meal is coming from’, says Trussell Trust Executive Chairman Chris Mould, ‘The truth is that there are people going hungry within a mile of the Olympic Park, including many children, and that

thousands are turning to foodbanks for emergency food nationwide. The Trussell Trust fully supports the Hunger Summit but surely we cannot stand up and say that global hunger must stop without also taking action to make sure that children are not malnourished and hungry here in the UK too?’

Despite being forced to temporarily relocate due to its proximity to the Olympic Park, Tower Hamlets foodbank gave emergency food to 30 people in 9 hours last week. 57.7% of children live in poverty in Tower Hamlets, the highest rate in the UK. Over 50% of Tower Hamlets foodbank recipients are children. Nationwide, Trussell Trust foodbanks provided at least three days emergency food to 128,697 people last year. A projected 200,000 will be fed in 2012/13.

Rising costs of food and fuel are impacting scores of people on the breadline in Britain. Yet, despite thousands of Britons turning to foodbanks because they cannot afford to feed themselves or their children, the UK is one of the few countries in the West in which

minimum nutrition standards and food poverty do not inform welfare policy. Indeed, there is currently no government monitoring of food poverty in the UK.

Mr Mould continues: ‘the collective effect of the government’s recent changes to tax and benefits will hit the bottom third of the population the hardest. Day in, day out, foodbanks already meet UK parents who are going without food to feed their children, or are forced to consider stealing to stop their children going to bed hungry. It’s going to get worse from April 2013 and we’re urgently calling on the government to put UK food poverty onto the policy agenda.

He adds: ‘Hunger should be eradicated in all its forms, both here in the UK and across the globe.’

Ends

Notes to the Editor

- David Cameron’s Hunger Summit will be held on Sunday 12th August in London to coincide with the closing of the Olympic Games. It will address hunger and malnutrition in the developing world.
- The Trussell Trust’s foodbank network partners with churches and communities nationwide to launch foodbanks that provide a minimum of three days emergency food to people in crisis. Over 90% food given out by foodbanks is donated by the public and every foodbank recipient is referred by a frontline care professional such as a doctor, social worker or schools liaison officer.
- Since April 2012 there has been a 100% increase in the number of Trussell Trust foodbanks being launched per week, rising from two new foodbanks every week to four.
- In 2011-12, 128,697 people were fed by Trussell Trust foodbanks, double the number fed in 2010-11. In the first quarter of the new financial year (April - June 2012) foodbanks fed 46,863 people and anticipate that over 200,000 will be fed in 2012-13. From April to date, 68,117 people have been fed nationwide, including 9,819 in London.
- The fifth anniversary of the start of the financial crisis is marked this week. When the crisis began there were less than 20 UK foodbanks; there are now 250.

- Many foodbanks are currently reporting an increase in client numbers as the absence of free school meals during the holidays sees parents struggle to fund the additional meals required.
- Tower Hamlets Foodbank Manager, Denise Bentley, says: 'We've helped families whose children are so malnourished that their GP has had to give them food supplements.'
- The Olympic Route Network means that Tower Hamlets Foodbank's Shadwell foodbank centre had to be relocated to Whitechapel for the duration of the Olympics. During this period, says Denise "we will work in close partnership with Tower Hamlets Children Social Services as part of the borough's emergency response provision, ensuring access to emergency food and support for people in crisis".
- Launching his Hunger Summit, David Cameron said: "It's really important that, while the eyes of the world are on Britain and we are going to put on this fantastic show for the Olympics, we remember people in other parts of the world who, far from being excited about the Olympics, are actually worried about their next meal and whether they are getting enough to eat."
- 13 million people live below the poverty line in the UK, 1 in every 5 people.
- Less than 5% of foodbank clients are homeless, many are working families struggling to make ends meet.
- The single biggest reason that people were referred to foodbanks in 2011-12 was benefit delay (29%), followed by low income (19%). Other reasons for referrals include delayed wages, domestic violence, sickness, unemployment, debt, benefit changes, refused crisis loans, homelessness and absence of free school meals during school holidays. All those who received emergency food were referred by frontline care professionals such as doctors, social workers and Citizens Advice Bureau.
- The Trussell Trust runs the only network of foodbanks in the UK. The Trussell Trust partners with local churches and communities to launch foodbanks in their towns. There are currently 250 foodbanks across the UK. Foodbanks are operating from Cornwall to Inverness, with 38 projects launched in London so far.
- In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks fed 26,000 nationwide; in 2009-10: 41,000 were fed; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697.

- Foodboxes contain three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable foods such as tinned fruit, vegetables, meat and fish as well as pasta, cereal, UHT milk, sauces, tea, long-life juice.
- Foodbank clients can receive a maximum of three foodbank vouchers in a row (each voucher can be redeemed for at least three days food), although longer term support is available at the discretion of the foodbank manager.
- Foodbanks signpost clients to other agencies able to help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis. A client struggling with debt, for example, would be referred to CAB or Christians Against Poverty who specialise in resolving debt problems.
- The Trussell Trust receives no government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of the public, businesses and charitable trusts. The Trussell Trust is entirely a-political.
- The Trussell Trust's vision is that every town should have a foodbank, creating a nation where no-one needs to go hungry.
- For more on foodbanks visit: www.trusselltrust.org/foodbank-projects
- The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity that partners with local communities to provide practical, non-judgemental help to people in crisis in the UK and Bulgaria: www.trusselltrust.org

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