



PRESS RELEASE 06/02/2013

UK's biggest foodbank charity disturbed by Downing Street's comments on hunger

Last week Downing Street stated that foodbanks are there for people who 'feel they need a bit of extra food' and that benefits were set at a level that means people should not go hungry. The very same week Trussell Trust foodbanks gave emergency food to 5,150 people in crisis across the UK who had been referred by frontline professionals. The Trussell Trust, which runs a 300 strong network of foodbanks and holds nationwide data on numbers turning to foodbanks, has asked the Prime Minister to respond positively to their requests to discuss UK food poverty and its causes.

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman Chris Mould says:

'Downing Street's comments on food poverty following last week's PMQs are worrying. Foodbanks are not where people go who 'feel they need a bit of extra food'. Foodbanks are where people go when they have little or no food left, where you will meet mums who are going without food to stop their children going hungry. The reality of hunger in the UK today is 250,000 people in crisis turning to foodbanks in a year. The Trussell Trust is urgently calling on the Prime Minister to speak to us about the thousands of people who are turning to our foodbanks for help and the reasons behind that.'

In 2012-13 approximately 250,000 people will have been referred to a Trussell Trust foodbank by frontline care professionals such as social workers, doctors, schools and Jobcentre Plus who have deemed their client to be in genuine crisis. The UK's biggest foodbank charity, The Trussell Trust, has invited Mr Cameron to visit a Trussell Trust foodbank to discuss the nationwide problem of food poverty twice during the last year. Whilst Mr Cameron has committed to visiting a non-Trussell Trust food project in his local constituency, The Trussell Trust is concerned that the Prime Minister will not be exposed to the extent of the nationwide problem if he only visits a food project that is not part of a national network.

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman Chris Mould says:

'Whilst we are delighted that the Prime Minister will visit his local food project, we are concerned that a local food project that is not part of a national network will be unable to provide Mr Cameron with insight into the scale of the growing, national problem of UK food poverty. The Trussell Trust has launched over 300 foodbanks nationwide and has a strong set of UK-wide data and experience that provides an invaluable window onto food poverty right across the UK. Trussell Trust foodbanks work with over 10,000 frontline care professionals who are referring their clients in crisis to foodbanks because they have identified a genuine need. We sincerely hope that the Prime Minister responds positively to our request to meet soon.'

The Trussell Trust is currently launching three new UK foodbanks every week in partnership with local churches and communities to help meet the demand for emergency food in the UK. In 2011-12 The Trussell Trust's foodbank network gave three days emergency food to 128,697 people. Since April 2012, The Trussell Trust has already given emergency food to over 245,000 people nationwide.

Rising food and fuel prices and increasing rents combined with static incomes, unemployment and changes to benefits have seen substantial numbers turn to foodbanks over the last 18 months. The introduction of the universal credit and changes to the social fund later in the year could have a significant impact on people on the breadline, making it increasingly urgent that the Prime Minister is aware of the problems people turning to foodbanks across the UK are facing. Ends

Notes to the Editor:

- 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% of food given out by foodbanks is donated by the public and foodbank recipients are referred by a frontline care professional such as a doctor, social worker, CAB, Jobcentre Plus or schools liaison officer.
- 13 million people live below the poverty line in the UK, 1 in every 5 people.
- 1 in 3 children live below the poverty line in the UK (Source: Oxfam).
- Less than 5% of foodbank clients are homeless, many are working families struggling to make ends meet.
- The two main reasons that people were referred to foodbanks in 2011-12 were benefit delay and low income. 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.
- The Trussell Trust runs the biggest network of foodbanks in the UK. The Trussell Trust partners with local churches and communities to launch foodbanks in their towns. There are currently over 300 Trussell Trust foodbanks launched across the UK.
- 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. In 2012-13 this number is likely to rise to 250,000.
- Foodboxes contain three days of non-perishable foods such as tinned fruit, vegetables, meat and fish as well as pasta, cereal, UHT milk, sauces, tea, long-life juice. The Trussell Trust works with dieticians to ensure that foodboxes are nutritionally balanced.
- 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.
- 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 UK poverty partner with Oxfam.
- 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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