

STRICTLY EMBARGOED 00.01AM WEDNESDAY 18TH NOVEMBER 2015

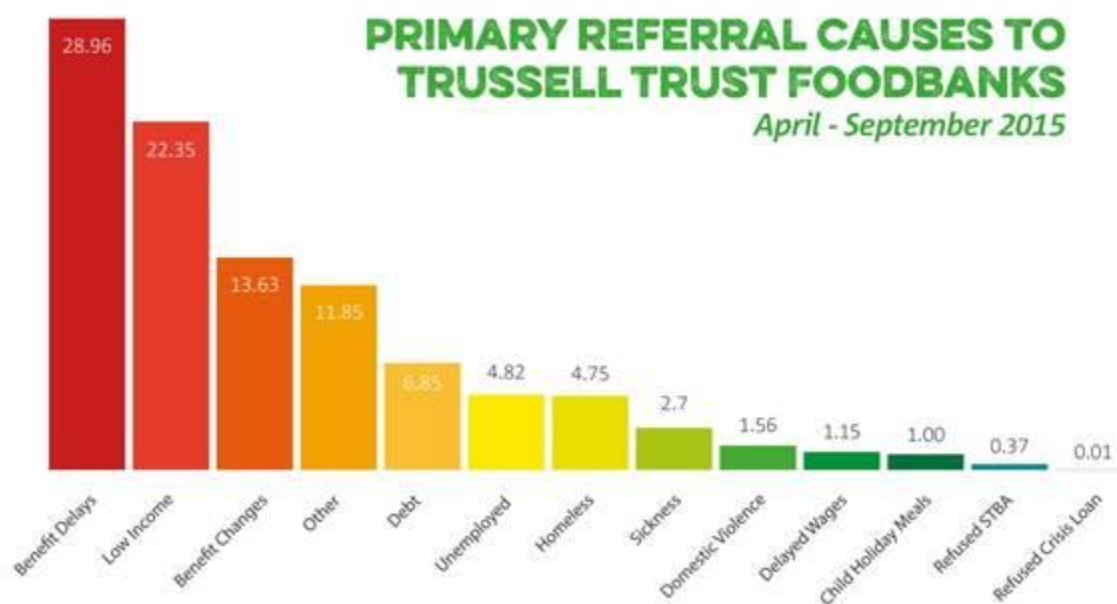
UK FOODBANK USE STILL AT RECORD LEVELS AS HUNGER REMAINS MAJOR CONCERN FOR LOW INCOME FAMILIES



- Trussell Trust foodbanks have given more emergency food supplies to people in the first six months of the 2015/16 FY than during the same period last year
- Overall rise of three percent on last year's figures
- Hunger still major concern for low income families
- Foodbanks increasingly providing additional services to help people out of poverty

Between April and September 2015, Trussell Trust foodbanks across the UK gave **506,369** three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis compared to **492,641** in the same period last year. 185,218 of the three day supplies went to children. On average, people needed 1.7 foodbank referrals in this six month period, leading us to estimate that approximately 298,000 people are likely to have been unique users.*

Benefit delays and changes remain the biggest cause of foodbank use accounting for 43 percent of total referrals (29 percent benefit delay; 14 percent benefit changes), a slight reduction on last year's 44 percent. Low income has risen slightly as a referral cause from 21 percent to 22 percent.* For more on how Trussell Trust data is compiled see notes to the editor



The charity, which runs a network of 425 foodbanks across the UK, says that numbers needing emergency food remain at worryingly high levels. UK foodbank director Adrian Curtis says:

'Latest foodbank figures are still at worryingly high levels. We look forward to the day that we can announce a decrease in numbers needing foodbanks, and we welcome the fact that latest national figures show a less dramatic rise. Whilst we hope that this is a sign that economic recovery is giving more people access to secure work, several foodbanks are reporting that some agencies and charities who would normally refer people in crisis to foodbanks have been unable to do so because funding reductions have caused their services to be squeezed or closed. We're seeing that hunger remains a major issue for low income families and individuals. When the proposed changes to tax credits are implemented, we are concerned that more working families will not be able to make ends meet, and that we could see a substantial rise in foodbank use as a result. As a nation we need to learn more about the realities of life for people struggling on low incomes and make sure that no incomes are too low to live on.'

A working single mum was helped by a foodbank recently when she had a problem with sickness and working tax credits being stopped as a result, she said: *'It can happen to you just like that. I always thought surely it can't be me, I still have my job, I can get by. But now I think you can only be a few steps away. It's all circumstantial. I really don't know what I would've done if the foodbank hadn't been there'*.

'When you've got children that's the worry, they've got needs. If it was just me it would be totally different. But when you have someone depending on you, and when you can't provide for them, it's scary, it's really scary. I was in a very dark place, and I honestly don't know what I would've done if the foodbank hadn't been there.'

Winter is likely to see a significant rise in numbers of people needing foodbanks, as people on low incomes face choices between eating and heating. In December 2014, referrals to foodbanks were 53 percent higher than the average across other months, with over 130,000 three day food supplies being given to people in crisis in just one month.

Today's research from the charity Turn2Us reveals that one in two low income working households are struggling to afford their energy costs, and that 33 percent of those struggling have had to skip meals.

Trussell Trust is currently working with npower to pilot 'Fuel Banks' which give prepayment meter top ups for people struggling to afford energy as well as food. This will be the first winter that Fuel Banks have been in operation.

Fuel Banks are just one example of a number of initiatives run by Trussell Trust foodbanks to help address the wider issues that contribute to or cause hunger. These 'More Than Food' projects aim to help people break out of crisis faster. Early indications show that when people are helped to tackle the root cause of their foodbank referral, they are less likely to need a foodbank again in future. Over 90 percent of Trussell Trust foodbanks now provide additional services alongside emergency food, ranging from debt and money advice to holiday lunch clubs and 'Eat Well Spend Less' courses.

Trussell Trust CEO David McAuley says: *'We are investing in additional services at foodbanks that help people to break out of crisis faster, and we're seeing really positive results from this. In one foodbank, after two months, over 90 percent of clients receiving help from their debt and money advice service had either resolved their issues or were close to having done so. But responsibility for helping people out of crisis must not rest with the voluntary sector alone, which is why we also need to see more high-level policy changes that help the poorest and reduce the number of people needing foodbanks in future.'*

We're seeking to engage politicians across parties in better understanding the reality of hunger and its causes. We want to see hunger and poverty eradicated in the UK, and I'd like to be reporting a massive drop in foodbank usage this time next year.'

Ends

Notes to Editor:

How Trussell Trust foodbanks work:

- Trussell Trust foodbanks provide three days' nutritionally balanced food and support to people in crisis in the UK. We also signpost people to other agencies and services able to help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis. As part of the charity's More Than Food approach, many foodbanks also host additional services like debt/financial advice, holiday lunch and breakfast clubs. [Read more](#) on our new debt and money advice service in partnership with Martin Lewis, Money Saving Expert.
- Everyone who comes to a Trussell Trust foodbank is referred by a professional such as a social worker, health visitor or schools liaison officer. Over 30,000 frontline professionals refer people to Trussell Trust foodbanks, and 50 percent are statutory agencies.
- Over 90 percent of food given out by Trussell Trust foodbanks is donated by the public. From April – September 2015: 4,158 tonnes of food was given out to people in crisis.
- The Trussell Trust is a charity motivated by Christian principles that runs the biggest network of foodbanks in the UK. For more on The Trussell Trust visit www.trusselltrust.org

Trussell Trust statistics:

Trussell Trust statistics are collected using an online data collection system into which foodbanks enter the data from each foodbank voucher. The system records numbers given three day emergency food supplies.

The Trussell Trust is measuring volume – the number of people to whom it has given three days' food supply (containing enough food for 10 meals). The Trussell Trust has consistently measured figures in this way and reports them at the middle and end of each financial year. Trussell Trust figures clearly state that we are counting the number of people to whom we have given three days' food – these are not necessarily unique people. Our data system is beginning to capture numbers of unique foodbank users on a national scale, and whilst it is too early to accurately use this figure, detailed evidence collected from a range of foodbanks indicates that on average, people needed 1.7 foodbank referrals in this six month period, leading us to estimate that approximately 298,000 people are likely to have been unique users.

- Trussell Trust data collection seeks to comply with ONS guidance. The Trussell Trust receives technical advice from a former senior government statistician, and has consulted with a range of statisticians ahead of publication.
- Trussell Trust operates a live data system.

- 'Benefit delays' refer to people not receiving benefits to which they are entitled on time, this category can also include problems with processing new claims, or any other time lags in people receiving their welfare payments.
- 'Benefit changes' refers to the problems resulting from a change in people's welfare payments, for example, people having their benefits stopped whilst they are reassessed. This can also include a sanction.
- 'Low income' refers to anyone who is struggling to get by on a low income. This could be people in work, or people on benefits, for whom a small crisis e.g. boiler breaking down or having to buy school uniform etc, can be enough to mean that they cannot afford food.

Trussell Trust figures cannot be used to fully explain the scale of the food poverty across the UK, because our figures only relate to Trussell Trust foodbanks and not to the hundreds of other independent food aid providers. There is no official data on other food aid projects, but some people estimate that there are likely to be the same number again of non-Trussell Trust foodbank style projects in the UK.

SPOKESPEOPLE, FOODBANK VISITS, REGIONAL BREAKDOWNS AND, WHERE POSSIBLE, CLIENT CASE STUDIES ON REQUEST.

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For more on separate research conducted by Turn2Us on energy problems experienced by people on low incomes (referenced in our release) contact:

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