



Social Fund Reform and Trussell Trust Foodbanks

Background

The 2012 Welfare Reform Act includes changes to the discretionary Social Fund, which will occur from April 2013. Community Care Grants and Crisis Loans for living expenses will be abolished and funding will instead be made available to unitary and upper-tier local authorities in England to enable them to provide new locally-administered assistance to vulnerable groups. The total funding available will be capped at 2005 budget levels which means there will be less available than there is at the moment.

What impact will this have?

All Local Authorities will be trying to find other ways of supporting people in crisis who would previously have been supported by grants from the Social Fund.

Some Local Authorities have already approached Trussell Trust foodbanks (in London, Wales and a few other places) to explore how they can work together to support people who previously would have been helped by a Social Fund grant.

With less funding available, the locally-administered replacements to the Social Fund are likely to help fewer people in need of temporary assistance. Foodbanks expect frontline care professionals to refer more people in crisis to them as a direct consequence irrespective of whether a local agreement between a Local Authority and a foodbank has been developed.

The Trussell Trust's view

Trussell Trust foodbanks cannot ignore the problems that changes to state funded welfare could cause. The Trust's priority remains to provide emergency food to people in crisis and, as a consequence, we must be open to discussing shared solutions with local authorities who want to work with us. Foodbanks must do this without compromising core values or becoming a contractual arm of the welfare state.

Trussell Trust foodbanks would welcome capacity building grants from local authorities to help meet increases in demand but would be extremely wary of entering into any contractual agreements to provide welfare services. Foodbanks are, and will remain, independent charities that partner with local communities and frontline care professionals to provide emergency food to people in crisis. The Trussell Trust will continue to be a voice for people experiencing food poverty in the UK.

The Trussell Trust expects demand for support from foodbanks to increase significantly. This will put increased pressure on food stocks in our foodbanks. Foodbanks will need greater support from the public to sustain our ability to meet local people's needs when they are in crisis.

For further information

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