

Wednesday 16th October (WORLD FOOD DAY)

PRESS RELEASE

Tripling in foodbank usage sparks Trussell Trust to call for an inquiry



Over 350,000 people received three days' emergency food from Trussell Trust foodbanks between April and September 2013, triple the numbers helped in the same period last year. The Trussell Trust says that UK hunger is getting worse and the charity is calling for an inquiry into the causes of UK food poverty and the consequent surge in foodbank usage.

Chris Mould, Executive Chairman of The Trussell Trust says: *'We said in April that the increasing numbers of people turning to foodbanks should be a wake-up call to the nation, but there has been no policy response and the situation is getting worse. The level of food poverty in the UK is not acceptable. It's scandalous and it is causing deep distress to thousands of people. The time has come for an official and in depth inquiry into the causes of food poverty and the consequent rise in the usage of foodbanks. As a nation we need to accept that something is wrong and that we need to act now to stop UK hunger getting worse.'*

The Trussell Trust is writing to David Cameron asking him to look into the recently raised by the Government's poverty tsar Frank Field MP.

Evidence from Trussell Trust foodbanks shows that rising living costs and stagnant wages are forcing more people to live on a financial knife edge where any change in circumstance can plunge them into poverty. Even marginal shifts in prices when people don't have elasticity in their personal finances can have a major impact. Food prices have risen by 12.6% above inflation over the past six years and rising energy prices this winter are likely to see more people forced to choose between eating and heating. People at foodbanks have started giving back food items that need cooking because they can't afford to turn on the electricity.

Many people on low-incomes are also being impacted by the implementation of April's welfare reforms. Trussell Trust foodbanks are reporting increased referrals as a result of the spare room subsidy, sanctioning and confusion caused by the devolution of the Social Fund.

Chris Mould says: *'Problems with welfare are not new, they have existed for years, but the reality is that when welfare provision breaks down, people go hungry. We're talking about mums not eating for days because they've been sanctioned for seemingly illogical reasons, or people leaving hospital after a major operation to find that their benefits have been stopped or delayed. It's not right that so many more people are now being referred to foodbanks due to problems with welfare, especially as much of this is preventable.'*

'This is not about pointing fingers, it's about finding solutions. That's why we believe an enquiry is now essential'

Chris Johnes, Oxfam's UK Poverty Programme Director, says:

"These figures lay bare the shocking scale of destitution, hardship and hunger in the UK. It is completely unacceptable that in the seventh wealthiest nation on the planet, the number of people turning to foodbanks has tripled."

"Oxfam welcomes The Trussell Trust's call for the Prime Minister to launch an urgent inquiry into why people are forced to turn to foodbanks."

Last week, British Red Cross announced that it will provide volunteers for the first time to support Tesco's nationwide food collection for Trussell Trust Foodbanks and FareShare because it is so concerned by levels of UK hunger.

The Trussell Trust's Chris Mould says 'Trussell Trust foodbanks across the UK provide a much needed and vital lifeline to people facing hunger but far fewer people should be needing them and the rise in numbers we are reporting today must sound an alarm.'

Ends

Notes to the Editor

- The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity that launches foodbanks to provide three days' nutritionally balanced non-perishable food to people in crisis.
- These figures have been released to coincide with **World Food Day** (16th October 2013).
- **355,985** people received a minimum of three days' emergency food from Trussell Trust foodbanks between April - September 2013, compared to 113,264 between April and September 2012. Numbers helped in the first six months of this financial year are more than the total number helped in the entirety of 2012-13 financial year (346,992). Of those helped in the last six months, over 120,000 (35 percent) were children.
- 65,177 people (19%) were referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks due to benefit changes between April and September 2013, compared to almost 14,897 (14%) in same period last year. 117,442 people (35%) were referred due to benefit delay, compared to 35,597 (33%) last year.
- Whilst there are now double the number of foodbanks open this year compared to this time last year, numbers given emergency food have increased threefold and well-established foodbanks across the UK are reporting significant rises in numbers helped.
- The Trussell Trust is launching two to three new foodbanks every week to help meet demand and has launched 400 UK foodbanks in partnership with churches and communities to date.
- The Trussell Trust foodbank model aims to help people break out of poverty rather than create dependency on a foodbank. As well as providing emergency food, Trussell Trust foodbanks also signpost clients to other agencies able to help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis.
- Trussell Trust foodbank users are referred by a frontline care professional such as a doctor, social worker, CAB or schools liaison officer. Over 18,000 frontline care professionals across the UK refer clients to Trussell Trust foodbanks, 50 percent of which are statutory agencies.
- Foodboxes contain at least three days' supply 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. Over 90% of food given out by foodbanks is donated directly by the public. In 2012-13, 3,492.44 tonnes of non-perishable food was donated.
- Foodbank clients can receive up to three consecutive foodbank vouchers before our system flags that the foodbank should speak to the referral agent to make sure that their client is receiving proper support to help them out of their crisis. Longer term support is available at the discretion of the foodbank manager but our aim is to help people out of poverty and prevent dependency. Each voucher can be redeemed for at least three days food.

- In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks gave three days' emergency food to 26,000 people nationwide; in 2009-10: 41,000 were helped; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697; in 2012-13: 346,992.
- Foodbanks help to prevent housing loss, mental health problems, family breakdown and crime.
- The Trussell Trust estimates that there would need to be 750-1,000 foodbanks to provide for people in crisis across the UK. Thousands of people are facing hunger today in towns with no foodbanks.
- For World Food Day, The Trussell Trust is running an appeal called '[Give it up for foodbanks](#)' to encourage more people to help stop UK hunger by giving up coffee, cake etc for a week and donating what they save.
- The Trussell Trust receives no government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of the public, businesses and charitable trusts.
- The Trussell Trust is a-political.
- 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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