

## The Trussell Trust's response to Feeding Britain's route map to ending hunger



Feeding Britain's route map to ending hunger, released today, highlights the scale of poverty that still exists in the UK and the hugely admirable effort by foodbanks and other charities to try and reduce it. Importantly, the report highlights that, one year on from the initial inquiry, we still have substantial and 'saddening' levels of hunger. It points out that as a nation we have a long way to go before we eradicate the 'hunger that stalks our land' – something that Trussell Trust foodbanks see first-hand day in, day out.

Evidence from the foodbanks in the Trussell Trust Network shows that there has not yet been a significant improvement in the numbers of people struggling to make ends meet. In the first six months of this financial year (April –September 2015) Trussell Trust foodbanks gave out 506,369 three day emergency food supplies to people in crisis, compared to 492,641 in the same period last year. <sup>[1]</sup> Problems with the social security safety net remains the biggest single reason people are referred for emergency food, with benefit delays and changes accounting for 43 percent of referrals.

The Trussell Trust is pleased to see Feeding Britain is still supporting the principle of a foodbank delivering much more than a food parcel. This is a ringing endorsement of the hard work of the foodbanks already delivering many additional projects. The report's suggestions follow on from advice we gave the committee on our 'More Than Food' approach in oral evidence at the beginning of the initial Feeding Britain inquiry. Excellent work is being done by Trussell Trust foodbanks to help people out of crisis and poverty in the long-term. Increasingly the Trussell Trust's More Than Food programme is tackling the underlying causes of hunger and poverty by helping foodbanks run additional services with partners. A good example of this is the successful debt and money advice 'financial triage' pilot announced in August 2014, which has just received another £500K donation from Martin Lewis, enabling it to be rolled out across more foodbanks. Another is 'fuelbanks' which we're currently piloting with npower.

Our More Than Food programme, running formally since early 2014, now encompasses a range of additional projects including debt advice, budgeting and money management, school holiday lunch clubs, cooking courses, housing, welfare and benefits advice, access to justice, employability, and educational projects.

However, we do have some concerns that the increasing workload and expectation placed on foodbanks by politicians and policy makers is disproportionate and greater than is, in some cases, practical. Trussell Trust foodbanks are volunteer run, often church led charities relying on the goodwill of the public. We all need to be mindful that problems with welfare provision cannot be – and should not be – solved by foodbanks and the voluntary sector alone. Foodbanks are not a replacement for the welfare state.

The Trussell Trust foodbank network has risen to the challenge of hunger over the last few years and has been able to help millions of people with emergency food and an increasing range of additional services, but it can never be a replacement for an effective social security system. We are pleased to see Feeding Britain highlight that referrals to foodbanks could be almost halved if problems with welfare delivery were tackled.

Trussell Trust Foodbanks feel strongly that continued adequate funding from central Government to local welfare assistance schemes is vital, and that more effort is made to make people facing crisis aware of these schemes, as well as ensuring those most in need can access them. We also encourage the Government to continue to pursue policies which seek to raise the minimum wage, increase take-up of the voluntary Living Wage, and to reduce the total amount of tax taken from low-paid workers.

We welcome the continued efforts by Feeding Britain to find solutions to hunger and poverty, and hope to see many of their recommendations taken up by politicians, regulators, business and the voluntary sector. The only way to eradicate hunger is to choose as a society to act. It's time for words to become action.