

Feeding Britain one year on: Update from The Trussell Trust



‘For I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in...’

Matthew 25:35 and the Trussell Trust’s Mission Verse

The Trussell Trust operates a network of 420 foodbanks across the UK providing three days nutritionally-balanced emergency food and support to people in crisis. Over 90% of the food given out by foodbanks is donated by the public. The network continues to be funded and operated independently of Government and reliant on the goodwill of some 40,000 volunteers, spread across the country and supporting local foodbanks.

In response to the questions posed by Feeding Britain for the update our response has three parts. Firstly, we draw upon updates from a range of foodbank projects with additional services and the Trussell Trust More Than Food team to explain the evolution of the foodbank network and update on some of the pilots and additional services being developed to tackle the root causes of poverty.

Secondly, we provide an update on the primary drivers of foodbank referral, drawing upon and expanding on the Trussell Trust’s recent evidence to the Work and Pensions Select Committee inquiry into benefit delivery.

Thirdly we expand on some of the biggest barriers to our work and the work of our referral partners in alleviating hunger and poverty in the UK. These represent factors affecting our ability to reduce the numbers of people referred to foodbanks.

We would also like to thank Blackburn, Gloucester, Malvern Hills, Manchester Central, Plymouth, Sparkhill, Norwich and Stoke on Trent foodbanks for their additions to this submission.

a) Our response

How has our work progressed and developed since last year’s evidence to the inquiry?

Trussell Trust foodbanks continue to operate their core role; providing of 3-days emergency nutritionally balanced food and support using a robust referral system. Visitors to foodbanks are referred by a frontline care professional such as a doctor, social worker or school liaison officer. Foodbanks also sign-post recipients to other agencies to help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis.

The size of the network has stayed roughly the same, with 420 foodbanks.

The Trussell Trust foodbank model has always included ways to help clients tackle the underlying cause of their crisis, and at a local level, many pioneering foodbanks have developed their own additional services to help people out of poverty that have proved very effective. In addition to this local innovation foodbanks in the Trussell Trust network are increasing co-locating or adding

additional services to their foodbank as part of the More Than Food approach which we have developed since early 2014.

As our past submission notes, our More Than Food approach has been developing informally for several years now and it is making significant progress in helping to address the root causes of hunger and poverty, helping more people at foodbanks to break out of the cycle of poverty. 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.

As reported in our previous submission, over 90% of Trussell Trust foodbanks provide services in addition to food. Foodbanks report they are running or co-locating a host of ad hoc and regular services including, debt advice, welfare support, baby basics, breakfast and school holiday lunch clubs.

Over the past year 42 foodbanks, 10% of the network, have run a service initiated with the Trussell Trust More Than Food team, based out of Salisbury. These have primarily been Financial Triage, debt and money advice pilots (8 foodbanks) the npower Fuelbank pilot (4 foodbanks) and Eat Well Spend Less (29 foodbanks trained). With a number of official pilots now reaching roll out stage this is expected to rapidly scale up over the next 12 months.

Next year we will be able to share more by way of data and evaluation on the wide range of More Than Food initiatives occurring in foodbanks.

b) What barriers are there to your work?

Too many people are receiving help from foodbanks due to avoidable failures with benefits delivery.

Someone who has no money at all due to a delay, an error, a sanction, are avoidable referrals to foodbanks and if the benefits system was functioning adequately a significant number of people might avoid needing help from a foodbank. Issues with benefits delivery – whether they are benefit delays or changes to benefits - continue to be the most common reason why people are referred to our foodbanks, causing hundreds of thousands of referrals each year.

In September 2015 Trussell Trust gave evidence to an inquiry led by the Work and Pensions Committee into the timeliness and accuracy of benefit delivery. Based on April 2014 – March 2015 data benefit changes and delays, many of them avoidable errors in benefits delivery, comprised a total of 44% of all referrals to our food banks. New data will shortly be released.

Our Emergency Use Only Report, published in conjunction with Oxfam, Child Poverty Action Group and the Church of England, in November 2014, flagged some of the causes of this. Our evidence given in September 2015 found no significant change in terms of referrals due to benefit delivery to foodbanks. In October 2015 we welcomed some incremental moves by the Government to soften the sanctions regime with the pilot of a new 14-day warning system¹ (although a wider look at the negative impact of the sanctions regime is needed) and confirmation that it would adopt one of the

¹ Welfare Rights net, Government to pilot 14 day warning period before applying sanctions so that claimants can put forward further evidence (October 2015)

recommendations of the Oakley review to ensure housing payments are not also stopped for people suffering a sanction.²

These have been very recently announced and are still to be implemented nationally. Until significant changes to benefit delivery are put in place nationwide we anticipate that often avoidable problems with state provision of welfare will remain the primary cause of hunger and referral to Trussell Trust foodbanks.

We will continue to monitor referral reasons to see if these changes have any reduction on total referrals due to benefit delays or changes.

Limits of a voluntary sector response

When it comes to foodbanks tackling hunger and poverty there are also practical and logistical challenges to the development of foodbanks.

Demand for our foodbanks reached its highest ever levels this year, and Apr 2014-Mar 2015 saw a 19% increase in the numbers of people helped in comparison to the previous year with over one million people given a three day emergency food supply.³ The foodbank network has risen to the challenge and been able to support this number with adequate food and additional services, but it can never be a replacement for an effective social security system.

Malvern Hills Food bank is quite small, operating from a warehouse with just a small Reception area but we are able to 'sign post' clients to a variety of places in the town for further help and advice.

Chris Bray, Chair, Malvern Hills foodbank

Challenges foodbanks face largely relate to areas linked to the scale of the problem, funding for services and pressures on the wider referral partner ecosystem of support for vulnerable people (increased pressure on local Council services, charities, housing associations and other organisations that support vulnerable people who might need help from a foodbank).

Storage and additional fresh food provision

Some foodbanks within our network face challenges at certain times of the year (e.g. Harvest and following our Neighbourhood food collection) when trying to find a space large enough to store donated food. The generosity of the public is overwhelming, and in 2014-2015 donated food amounted to more than 10,290 tonnes. But space for non-perishable food often comes at a cost, with some foodbanks having to hire premises for varying lengths of time. Others have limited, or no, access to cold storage which means efforts to augment the 3-days emergency food parcel with fresh or surplus produce are not easily scalable for all foodbanks. Many foodbanks would benefit from greater storage space or logistical (transportation) support from local businesses or communities.

Transporting large donations can also be an issue for foodbank managers and volunteers who don't have suitable transport, some report having to rely on a limited number of cars supplied by volunteers at their own expense.

² Guardian, DWP finally acts to end housing benefit 'maladministration' scandal (October 2015)

³ This is not a measure of unique individuals. The Trussell Trust is measuring volume – the number of people to whom it has given three days' food

“We are becoming limited in warehouse space to accommodate our food stocks. Also the seasonal fluctuations in donations – we are overrun during Harvest Festival and Christmas periods but have quieter periods in February-March and over the summer. We need to manage stock levels and rotas of staff and volunteers to handle this very carefully. We are also 1 year away from the end of our 5 year grant & need to find additional funds to replace this, we also need to move to a bigger space.”

Liisa Wiseman, Sparkhill foodbank

“In one case a female client with her children who were fleeing domestic violence were referred to the foodbank. We found it difficult to provide guidance about where to go due to a lack of services.”

Ros, project manager at Blackburn foodbank

“We are seeing a rise in homelessness and homeless hostels in Wigan are feeling the pressure. We see people who are homeless who have no accommodation referred but sometimes the hostels are full so they have nowhere to go.” **Dave, project manager at Atherton and Leigh foodbank**

Funding of the foodbank network

The Trussell Trust has taken the decision not to apply for or receive Government funding. This ensures both independence of voice and that we do not become part of the welfare state.

This means foodbanks have to raise both food and financial donations from their local communities. Whilst many foodbanks are well served by food donations from a generous public, a few have difficulties outside of harvest and national collection periods. The placement of permanent collection points in major supermarkets, particularly Tesco, has been a big help in terms of maintaining a consistent supply of food.

People are brilliant – we are in harvest festival season and it is rolling in. There are lots of other opportunities re food surpluses but it depends on having volunteers and staff every week being able to pick stuff up (and there may not be stuff to pick up) and sometimes we have to put logistics first.

Ennice Halliday, Plymouth Foodbank

As we look to scale up the More Than Food approach, some projects require significant injections of finance (e.g. for computers, cooking facilities, transport facilities and physical space) whilst foodbanks aspiring to be community hubs also need the infrastructure and staff and volunteer capacity to run additional services.

For example, in order to be able to provide the advice and support services that we are introducing through the More Than Food approach there must be suitable space for consultations to take place at the foodbank centre and that space must give a degree of privacy to the client. Many foodbanks operate from cramped premises which do not allow clients to have private conversations.

c) What are the trends in demand for your services and how have they changed since you gave evidence to the inquiry?

The demand for foodbanks across the UK grew again since the last inquiry. The Trussell Trust gave 1,094,003 people three days' emergency food supply between April 2014- March 2015. This is a 19% increase on the previous year.

Benefits delays continue to be the primary reason individuals are referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks (29% of referrals during 2014-15) with low income being the second most common reason for people using our services (22%). Our answers earlier in this response detail some of the drivers behind these.

We are seeing increasing numbers of people being referred primarily due to 'low income'. To react to this Trussell Trust foodbanks are providing a range of additional services including money and debt advice along with CV-writing support and jobs clubs. Over 50 foodbanks currently also operate job clubs as an additional service attached to or partnering with the foodbank.

Our mid-year statistics are due to be released in early November. These will provide a more recent picture of the demand for our services and the primary reasons why individuals are referred to our foodbanks.

d) What are the key problems facing people who are hungry, in respect to their living costs such as rent, food, water, communications, transport, gas and electricity?

Living costs present many problems to people who are referred to our foodbanks, and are often an underlying and contributory factor of their hunger. Below we identify and expand upon just a few of these problems and later demonstrate how the Trussell Trust is tackling some of these issues through the More than Food model.

Utility costs

Foodbanks within our network have reported increases in referrals during the colder seasons as people balance the cost of both heating and eating. Managing household spending can become difficult and complex for those with little income due to rising and sometimes unpredictable costs of utilities due to seasonal effects.

During the financial triage pilot study, for the clients who were triaged as being in need of debt advice urgently, the most problematic debts were those owed to utility companies.

Foodbank projects report similar experiences:

"Our referrals definitely increase as soon as the cold weather arrives with many having to choose to 'heat or eat'. Clients often ask if we can help with money on their gas and electricity but we do not have funds to do so." **Liisa Wiseman, Sparkhill foodbank**

"Transport, Top up metres for electricity (these are inefficient, expensive and punish the poor) and communications (people not having phone credit)" **Tim Byron, Manchester Central foodbank**

A recent report carried out by Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford investigated the 'heat or eat' dilemma in rural areas, interviewing clients from Trussell Trust foodbanks in Cornwall. The report findings

suggest neither fuel nor food is sacrificed for the other, but instead those with the lowest income ration both. The quantity and quality of food is reduced, whilst the use of fuel for cooking and lighting is often prioritised over warmth.⁴ Recipients of foodbank parcels were interviewed to provide evidence for the report, and almost all described their home as cold during the winter months.⁵

We address our response to this submission, working with partners such as NEA and npower on a fuel bank.

School holiday hunger

Extra costs required during the school holidays are problematic for those on a low income, although numbers affected can be hard to quantify. The summer holidays proves to be a difficult time for many who must provide extra food to feed their families when during term time their children may usually receive free school meals. Alongside this, the cost of child care during holidays as well as needing to buy school uniform and school essentials is tipping some families into crisis. 1,137 referrals were made to our foodbanks over the summer holidays this year (27th July – 1st September 2015) specifically because families found it difficult to feed their families, although this will underreport the problem

People are hit especially hard in September when children were due to go back to school – with sudden costs of school uniforms for example. There is quite a good support scheme throughout the Wirral for child hunger ensured that the food bank saw no change in numbers over the holidays.

Richard Roberts, Wirral foodbank

School holiday meal provisions were provided at around 30 Trussell Trust foodbanks during this same period demonstrating that foodbanks are seeing a need for school holiday meal provision.

A number of Trussell Trust food banks are also working with schools and referral partners to arrange local partnerships to try and identify people who may need extra support during the school holidays and reduce the need for foodbank referrals.

Financial difficulties – Across the Trussell Trust foodbank network we continue to see people being referred to us in financial difficulty. In 2014/15, an average of 7.29% people were referred to our foodbanks because of debt problems, although underlying debt issues affect a much larger proportion than this who are referred for other reasons. Our financial triage pilot explained in section (k) is expanding to meet this need.

e.) If a food assistance provider, are you collecting and publishing data on the reasons people are coming to you for food assistance?

Yes we publish UK-wide statistics twice a year.

⁴ Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford, Dr Carolyn Snell, Professor Elizabeth Dowler, 'Heat or Eat: Food and Austerity in Rural England' (July 2015), p.3

⁵ Dr Hannah Lambie-Mumford, Dr Carolyn Snell, Professor Elizabeth Dowler, 'Heat or Eat: Food and Austerity in Rural England' (July 2015), p.4

g.) If yes, have you been able to differentiate between, and therefore categorise, the various benefit-related causes behind each case of hunger? What room is there for improvement in this field, and how many and what proportion people who find themselves hungry have been affected by each benefit-related cause?

(Info from evidence submission to Work and Pensions Select Committee)

The experience of our foodbanks demonstrates that there is a clear link between welfare delivery problems and foodbank use across the UK. We found that the impact of benefits delivery problems had a far reaching and varied impact upon those referred to our foodbanks.

1. Delayed delivery – in 2014-2015 29% of individuals were referred to our foodbanks due to welfare delays. Clients switching between benefits were frequently left with no income due to delays and errors, and administrative delays as well as payments in arrears were frequently experienced by individuals starting on Universal Credit.
2. Sanctions - Harsh decisions or errors with sanctioning exacerbated benefit delivery problems. A sample of 51 foodbanks in September 2015 found 62% of respondents stated that they had reported an increase in referrals over the past 12 months due to sanctions.

We are looking to further develop our voucher system and research over the next 12 months to ensure further granular detail can be captured on the type of benefit and type of problem clients are facing and wider underlying drivers beyond the primary referral reasons.

The Trussell Trust would like to suggest that the following recommendations are taken up by the committee.

1. Many foodbanks continue to report, as in Emergency Use Only, that clients who desperately need it are not able to access Local Welfare Assistance schemes when their benefits are stopped or reduced. Foodbanks feel strongly that communication needs to be improved in job centres but also that local Councils need to effectively administer these schemes and ensure they properly spend the funding allocated rather than using foodbanks as an informal support service. In areas where awareness of STBAs has improved, there have been positive results, with fewer people being referred to foodbanks because they had not been told about STBAs.
2. We recommend the Department of Work and Pensions investigates Universal Credit arrears and administrative delays and what can be done to ensure people don't fall into debt, or suffer a delay in any payments, due to switching to Universal credit.

h.) Does your data show that benefit delays have become more frequent, do they last longer and are they now more likely to occur at the start of a new claim, or when an existing claim is recalculated? From the data you collect, which particular benefits are most troublesome in this respect?

(taken from our submission to the Work and Pensions Select Committee)

Our data shows that benefit delays continue to be an issue for people referred to foodbanks. The majority of our foodbank managers (58%) noted no noticeable improvement in the handling of

benefit delivery over the past year (2014-2015), and 21% stated that things had got worse. Just 12% had seen an improvement.

We have been advised that although numbers of problems have in some cases gone down, the problems that do occur last longer. This was during information collected in the summer for the evidence submission.

Employment Support Allowance (ESA) and Job Seekers Allowance (ESA) were the most often cited benefits with issues of delivery. Recipients switching between the two benefits were frequently left without income due to delays and errors with the average wait time of 4.4 weeks whilst in some cases claimants were waiting for as long as 10-20. Foodbanks also experiencing Universal Credit (UC) starts found that a combination of payment arrears and administrative delay caused acute short term income crises amongst clients.

i.) Have you had any experience with people in receipt of Universal Credit? If so, how do the numbers compare with those in the present system, and what difficulties have they encountered that have exposed them to hunger?

(taken from our submission to the Work and Pensions committee)

In our written evidence to the benefits delivery inquiry, 23 out of the 51 foodbanks surveyed were in locations where UC had been rolled out. Issues raised at this stage were primarily around admin delays and payments in arrears.

Gloucester foodbank reported one case of an individual who applied for Universal Credit in June but owing to reassessment was due to receive their first payment in September. Elsewhere, waits of up to 5 weeks were reported in **Blackburn** where there was a sharp increase in referrals due to issues with Universal Credit. On average most foodbanks report between 4-6 weeks where flexibility with the arrears process and options available to clients have not been explained. **North Liverpool's** foodbank has debt advisory service co-located and they reported an increase in clients with Universal Credit arrears suffering debt issues.

“The biggest problem seems to be with the people transitioning to it having been on JSA... In one example a client who was on JSA, got a job, but then his company went bust so he had to sign on to Universal Credit. He was in work 6 weeks but then had to wait 9 weeks to get his welfare payments started again.” **Sue Torpey Knowsley foodbank**

j. Aside from living costs and benefit-related issues, what other factors are causing people to be hungry and how has this affected demand for food assistance? In particular, how has the number of people turning to you for assistance because their wages are insufficient to make ends meet changed?

Low income continues to be an issue for users of our foodbanks, comprising 22% of all individuals referred (2014-2015). This is an increase of 2% on the previous year. Low income is the main reason that people are referred to Trussell Trust foodbanks in Northern Ireland. We are in the process of adding additional data capture to our foodbank referral vouchers to help identify further trends in this area in 2016.

Please see question D which provides examples of other factors which are causing people to go hungry.

k.) Have you been able to provide advice and advocacy alongside an emergency food parcel or meal, along the lines of a ‘Food Bank Plus’ model outlined by the inquiry, and what impact has this had on the numbers of people who are hungry?

The Trussell Trust’s More Than Food model (akin to ‘foodbank plus’) has been in development for some time, as reported to the inquiry during our original oral evidence session. We have, as planned, continued to build on this.

Foodbanks within the Trussell Trust network have been providing additional services for many years. Salisbury foodbank, run by the Trussell Trust, has been operating this type of support since as early as 2008 although we had not ascribed a particular name to it until the beginning of 2014. Others in the network needed to focus on expanding and consolidating emergency food provision after an extraordinary period of growth since 2012/13.

The ambition remains to ensure foodbanks within our social franchise network can extend the assistance offered to clients, helping more overcome the complex causes of poverty.

The More Than Food programme includes a number of different projects:

Eat Well Spend Less

‘Eat Well Spend Less’ is a cooking and budgeting course ran over six sessions of two and a half hours in order to assist those who need extra support to manage the cost of food and household budgeting. The course covers topics such as menu planning and food preparation, nutritional food advice, household budgeting, and supermarket psychology. The idea is to make a positive intervention to encourage healthy eating, less reliance on expensive forms of food and fiscal responsibility & resilience.

"Really helpful, productive advice. Was great to get to know new people and share knowledge" **York Foodbank participant**

28 Trussell Trust foodbanks are currently running these courses, and we hope that by the end of the year 36 foodbank centres will be able to provide this service.

School Holiday Lunch Clubs

The Trussell Trust – with thanks to funding from the Innocent Foundation – has begun to roll out breakfast and lunch clubs to families who find it difficult to provide extra food for their children during the school break . We aim to have it rolled out in 50 food banks within the next 2 years.

Stoke-on-Trent have been running a school holiday lunch club since February half term and have reported positive feedback. Children who attend participate in activities promoting exercise and prepare their own healthy lunch.

This adds to the excellent work of others in the network either running directly, or partnering with, holiday lunch clubs run by Magic Breakfast, Make Lunch, local churches and schools.

Energy Bank and npower Fuelbank

We are working with npower in a staged rollout of the npower Fuelbank that provides people who are on prepayment meters with on average 2 weeks' worth of gas or electricity, or a combination of both. This is part of our larger project that will include help for the many more people who are not on prepayment meters but who have inadequate heating in their homes because of concern about incurring unmanageable fuel bills, also we are researching and developing ways of helping people who are off the gas grid and who therefore have higher heating costs."

Wirral foodbank began working in partnership with npower in July, and has already reported high demand for fuel vouchers amongst their visitors. In total, 410 adults and 338 children have benefitted from the scheme with a total spend represented of £9810.

It is hoped that this will address the problem of households who 'self-disconnect' and ration gas and electricity use as well as food consumption in order to save money. Research and evaluation of the project is being conducted by National Energy Action.

Financial Triage and debt advice

The Trussell Trust began a pilot introducing financial triage and debt advice into 8 foodbanks, the pilot study ran from Feb 2015 to July 2015 but preparations for this work started in March 2014 when foodbanks were invited to take part in a pilot study.

Volunteers were trained in a triage approach to be able to identify and prioritise client needs for debt advice or help with money management. Clients in need of such advice were introduced to trained advisors who were present at the foodbank centre. The triage approach and direct referral to appropriate advisors resulted in a far greater level of client engagement with the advice services that they needed.

A £500,000 donation from Martin Lewis and Comic Relief allowed the initial development of our financial triage scheme. From January 2016 we aim to further expand the service across our foodbank network to include budgeting and money management skills and debt advice as needed.

Case study: Client of Cardiff foodbank financial triage pilot

Mr C had a prepayment meter for his gas bill, he had cataracts and due to this and the siting of the meter he had not put any credit on it for around 12 months as he could not see what he was doing. He had coped through the winter by putting extra clothing on and spending most of his time in libraries and day centres to keep warm. Mr C had been to foodbank before and been advised by the volunteers to attend an advice centre, they had made him several appointments which he failed to attend. Having met with the advisor at the foodbank Mr C felt more confident that they would be able to do something about his problems and attended the appointment given to him. After negotiations the advisor was able to have the meter moved so Mr C could read the instructions. They were also able to negotiate the standing charge [which was the bulk of the

arrears] to be waived for the period. When Mr C was contacted as a follow-up to check the outcome of the advice he stated

Mr C said 'I had arrears with the gas which were stressing me out, I didn't know how I would pay it. The advisor spoke to them and got them to cut the bill a bit and I agreed weekly payments on the rest. It feels like a weight off my shoulders they are helping me do a weekly budget which I have never done before..... Before I met him at the foodbank I was too scared to go to the advice centre as I felt like such a fool.'

Wider initiatives in the network

It is important to note that for many years Trussell Trust foodbanks have been delivering innovative ways to tackle the underlying causes of hunger and poverty which they witness. Many foodbank centres in our network carry out fantastic support work independent of the More Than Food initiative and we also wish to share with the committee some highlights of these, which have been submitted to us by individual projects in the course of gathering this submission.

Some examples included:

Blackburn foodbank assists those looking for work by offering access to their computer suite alongside assistance with IT skills and job applications. They also hope to introduce a support worker to actively assist visitors with housing and welfare benefits.

Sparkhill foodbank provides similar assistance with job searches as well as debt and money management advice and support for victims of domestic abuse, trafficking, slavery and forced marriage.

Atherton & Leigh foodbank provide a range of additional services on site, including working with a group of local solicitors to provide legal advice service which has a 100% success rate for all cases taken on regarding appeals on benefit decisions and sanctions.

I.) How has your work been affected by, and interacted with Local Welfare Assistance schemes?

From 2013 the centrally administered social fund was replaced by local welfare assistance. Money from the social fund was allocated to local authorities who were given greater control over the spending of these funds. This is reflected in the varied experiences foodbanks have with Local Welfare Assistance Schemes and supports the idea of a 'postcode lottery'. They commented upon disparities in the availability of local welfare assistance across the country in April 2014 and reported how some councils underspent their funds allotted to this. (note: of the £136m available to those councils to spend on local welfare during 2013-2014, around £67m went unspent and unused by those in need).

In many cases foodbanks within the Trussell Trust network work closely with their local authority, and information about welfare assistance schemes are readily communicated to them. For example, **Stoke-on-Trent foodbank** has worked with the Commission for Wider Welfare Reform set up by the

local council which investigates ways to assist the most vulnerable in the community. In response to this, the local council has also created a hardship fund which foodbank users are able to apply for.

However, elsewhere foodbanks are facing barriers which prevent productive interactions with Local Welfare Assistance Schemes including:

1. Poor communication about the availability of assistance schemes. The resulting lack of information and knowledge makes it difficult for foodbanks to successfully direct visitors to the emergency welfare provided locally.
2. Some of our foodbanks also feel that there is unfair and restricted eligibility to these funds, which in some cases is only available to those who are currently in receipt of benefits. It is therefore problematic for those who are not receiving welfare payments – due to delays, changes or sanctions to their benefits – and need to access the local welfare assistance scheme.
3. Further concerns surround the government announcement that central funding for local welfare assistance schemes would be limited from September 2015. **Medway foodbank** appreciates Local Welfare Assistance Schemes, but are apprehensive about what will happen when funding for this ‘safety net’ is taken away.

m. Is there any sign of ‘giving fatigue’ when it comes to food donations, and how might this be resolved? Are charitable food supplies able to keep up with demand?

90% of the food provided by Trussell Trust foodbanks is donated, and we receive particularly generous donations at Christmas, Easter and Harvest. On the whole most foodbanks find themselves well provisioned, with the biggest single yearly contribution of food supplies the result of ongoing national food collection coordinated with Tesco, which is invaluable in the support and donations it generates both for the Trussell Trust foodbank network and to local charities supported by surplus food charity Fareshare.

However, there are geographical variations across the country with a small number of foodbanks anecdotally reporting ‘giving fatigue’ over the past six to twelve months. Foodbanks continue to work hard to ensure that there is enough food provision to meet demand and come up with innovative and creative means to encourage donations.

n.) Do you forecast that the numbers of hungry people will increase or decrease in the year ahead?

A further update will be provided in mid-November as part of our regular six monthly reporting cycle.

Measuring hunger

o) Are we any closer to knowing how many people in this country are hungry?

We have yet to see any comprehensive measure of food insecurity introduced by Government, charity or businesses, although there is an increasing amount of academic literature on the subject and we commend the work of various academics in investigating the issue.

It should be noted the Government definition of poverty is now under review and an independent measure or index of poverty has yet to be developed.

q. How might we ensure more good quality food that becomes surplus in the food retail and manufacturing sectors can be rescued for human consumption? In particular, how can we overcome the barriers to redistributing large quantities of surplus food and perishable goods like fruit and vegetables?

Accepting surplus fresh foods can present difficulties for foodbanks who cannot cope with storing perishables or with the unpredictable nature of batches of surplus food. However, some of our foodbanks with cold storage facilities are able to accept and distribute surplus fresh food on an ad hoc basis although this can be more difficult to do on a regular basis.

Links with the local community – in the form of ad hoc collections from market traders, allotment growers, event caterers and in a few cases community farms – is just one example of how our foodbanks are using surplus food to address hunger. Our **Tavistock foodbank** is part of the foodcloud initiative alongside the organisations Tesco and Fareshare, another initiative which is tackling food waste. The scheme involves an app that alerts charities to surplus food available at Tesco stores at the end of each day. The food will include near-date and fresh food that would have otherwise become waste food.

“The allotment association has generously donated surplus fresh vegetables and fruit in season which we offer to our clients when they visit”. **Malvern Hills foodbank**

Child hunger

u.) How big an issue has child hunger become – both during term time and the school holidays – and how should this be ameliorated?

Child hunger continues to be a big issue, and of the 1,094,003 people to whom the Trussell Trust provided food last year (2014-2015), 400,199 were children. As mentioned previously, the summer holidays prove to be a particularly difficult time for many who must provide extra food, pay for childcare and also purchase school essentials for the new term. For those earning little, these extra costs can tip their family into crisis. We do not have detailed statistics to share on the extent of school holiday hunger, but are looking to measure and evaluate our own roll out of school holiday lunch clubs.

Recommendations

v) What new commitments should we seek from the Government, and from which departments, to relieve and prevent hunger in this country?

We make the following recommendations to the Department of Work and Pensions and the Department for Communities and Local Government. We hope that they consider policy relating to welfare or wages with an aspiration to stop UK hunger in mind.

Benefits delivery - Please refer above to our recommendations on improvements to welfare delivery.

Local Welfare Assistance Schemes –

1. Make sure assistance funds are adequately funded by central Government and local Government, as they are often a last resort and safety net for the most vulnerable clients of foodbanks.
2. Make sure they are accessible as well as available
3. Ensure that the eligibility criteria for assistance schemes include people not currently in the benefits system due to error, delay or other administrative issues. Issues with welfare delivery are the most common reasons for referral to foodbanks, yet in some cases these clients do not have any recourse to emergency local funds as Councils say they are not eligible to access them. Expanding the eligibility criteria would ensure Councils are not underspending and leaving people in severe need without access to funds that could alleviate poverty and decrease reliance on foodbanks

Low Pay –

1. We encourage the Government to continue to pursue policies which seek to raise the new National Living Wage, increase take-up of the voluntary Living Wage, and to reduce the total amount of tax taken from low-paid workers.
2. We are concerned at proposals to remove or reduce tax credits before a living wage is fully introduced particularly as independent experts such as the IFS and Resolution Foundation warn of the impact of tax credits will have on some of the poorest working families. We are worried that new changes to tax credits may in fact place more families on a lower income and in poverty.

Placing 'Job advisors' in foodbanks

On Tuesday 27th October it was reported that the Secretary of State for work and Pensions wished to roll out an DWP experiment involving the placement of a Job Centre Plus adviser in an independent foodbank. The Trussell Trust has not yet seen details published by the Department of Work and Pensions or by the independent foodbank in question as to how this pilot is working and evaluated so we cannot comment on the specifics of that pilot.

It is worth noting that the story was inaccurately reported by some media outlets last week. The Trussell Trust, which runs a network of over 420 foodbanks has had no conversations with the DWP or the Secretary of State about this and has not agreed to roll out this idea. Neither has The Trussell Trust been involved in any pilots. No Trussell Trust foodbank would ever be forced to have a DWP advisor in a foodbank because it was part of the Trussell Trust network, and no Trussell Trust foodbank would be encouraged to do anything that they felt might jeopardise the non-judgemental environment our foodbanks operate in.

At a local level, The Trussell Trust has been discussing ideas to improve DWP processes in order to reduce the number of people left hungry due to problems with benefits delivery. One idea discussed privately with foodbanks and a small number of MPs who are interested in reducing poverty caused by welfare problems (but not yet discussed with DWP) was to give foodbank clients

access to specific welfare advisors tasked with ‘troubleshooting’ benefit related admin errors, delays or payments that had led people to need foodbanks. The idea would be to right the wrongs of the current system which can leave people without an income for weeks or even months, and this person may well be available on the phone rather than in a foodbank. This is very different to a ‘job advisor’.

Following DWP comments, and the media reports last week, we have asked to urgently meet the department to find out more about their intentions and to offer thoughts on ways of working that would offer a better solution for both foodbanks and welfare recipients.

w.) What new commitments are required from organisations in the private and voluntary sectors that would help maximise the effectiveness of anti-hunger strategies?

We encourage business to become involved in practical ways in order to help maximise the effectiveness of anti-hunger strategies as well as responding positively to some of the wider policy questions on tackling low pay and insecure work.

In terms of our own work to stop UK hunger we have already been hugely impressed with the response of some businesses and hope others will follow suit. Some of our biggest supporters include.

Tesco is one business that has made a long term commitment to the work of the Trussell Trust in the form of their Neighbourhood Food Collection. These collections are held in stores across the country twice a year, and Tesco adds an extra 30% to the total amount of customer donations, which is passed on directly to the foodbank network. This summer 3.6 million meals were donated at this event, split between Trussell Trust and surplus food charity Fareshare.

Engineering company Cummins has given logistical and supply chain support as the foodbank network coped with rapid growth in recent years. Other businesses who we work in partnership with include; Kelloggs who have supported our holiday breakfast clubs and regularly supply cereals to foodbanks and nPower who have funded our fuel bank pilot, aimed at helping people at risk of disconnection from pre-payment top up meters.

Unilever over several years has offered admirable support over several years, with funding going towards supporting regional development officers and rolling out Eat Well Spend Less courses.

Waitrose also have been supportive through their PCPs and regular Community Matters for foodbank funding at community level.

Many other businesses, large and small, offer financial support, volunteer time and food donations.

We also welcome the generous donation of Martin Lewis to fund our financial triage programme roll out. We hope that with more donations such as these, funding practical support for people in poverty, more can be done to stop UK hunger.

x.) What particular role do you believe Feeding Britain could take on, both locally and nationally, to relieve and prevent hunger in this country?

Feeding Britain plays an important role, both in an evidence gathering capacity on the extent of food poverty and the work being done to alleviate it and in holding Government and politicians to account on the root causes of hunger and what needs to be done to tackle them.

We have four suggestions as to future focus for the committee:

1. Hold central and local Government to account, both on the way welfare is delivered and on the changing role and nature of the safety net.
2. Support the take up of the new voluntary Living Wage.
3. Help charities come together to find a more complete measure of UK hunger and food insecurity, than what we currently have. Help foster positive dialogue between different parts of the voluntary sector actively involved in tackling hunger; and ensure that all key players are regularly updated about and included in Feeding Britain developments, in order to generate strong relationships within the sector and with the committee.
4. Avoid getting too involved in the practical delivery of emergency food and community hubs itself, since this risks duplicating the work of existing organisations.