



CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE IMPACT REPORT

MARCH TO SEPTEMBER 2020

trusselltrust.org



FOREWORD

Introducing this report brings with it mixed emotions - a sense of awe about what has been achieved by volunteers, staff, and partners during this very challenging time, but also sadness and concern at the further rise in already increasing levels of need for food banks' support that the pandemic has triggered.

The response of food banks, churches, businesses, other charities, and the public has been astounding. New collaborations formed rapidly and existing ones developed, helping our network adapt to making home deliveries, maintain food stocks, and accelerate the use of e-referrals, and enabling us to set up a national telephone helpline to ensure that people who need a food bank's support can access it even if they are self-isolating or shielding.

We are deeply grateful for the generous support and fruitful partnership we have seen at this time, and for the dedication, responsiveness, and creativity that food bank volunteers and staff across the UK have shown. Without this, our work would simply not have been possible.

And yet, we continue to believe that the UK should be a society in which no one needs to use a food bank, and in which everyone should have the dignity of being able to afford to buy food, even during a pandemic. As such, we have been working hard to raise awareness and influence policy during this time, using the data gathered by our Foodbank Network to inform politicians and policy makers about how the pandemic is affecting people with the fewest financial resources to weather the storm.

Sadly, over the coming months we expect to see further increases in the need for food banks' support as the economic impacts of the pandemic continue to be felt. Difficult though this period will no doubt be, we can draw hope and encouragement from what it has been possible to achieve together so far. I know that our food banks, volunteers, staff, supporters, and partners will continue to show compassion whilst also seeking to shape a more just society, in which everyone has the dignity of being able to buy their own food.



Emma Revie

Chief Executive of the Trussell Trust

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Emma Revie'.

CONTENTS

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| About the Trussell Trust | 4 |
| Setting out the challenge | 6 |
| Our response in numbers | 7 |
| Staying open, staying safe | 8 |
| Keeping food banks supplied | 10 |
| Delivering emergency food | 13 |
| Helping people access support | 13 |
| Food bank grants | 17 |
| Volunteering | 19 |
| Influencing policy | 20 |
| Sharing the story | 22 |
| Looking ahead | 24 |



ABOUT THE TRUSSELL TRUST

The Trussell Trust supports a nationwide network of food bank centres, and together they provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty and campaign for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

In the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty - including 4.5 million children. During the pandemic, food banks in the Trussell Trust network saw an unprecedented increase in need. Between April and September, food banks in our network provided 1,239,399 number of emergency food parcels to people in crisis – of these, 470,854 went to children. Overall, this represents a 47% increase in need during the crisis compared to a 23% increase seen this time last year.

OUR VISION

Our vision is for a UK without the need for food banks.

OUR VALUES

Our work is shaped and guided by four key values:



COMPASSION

We are moved to respond practically and relationally to people who find themselves unable to afford the essentials, and seek to alleviate suffering through crisis support, awareness-raising, and policy-influencing.



JUSTICE

We believe we have a responsibility to challenge and help change systems and practices that disadvantage people and make it difficult for them to escape poverty, putting them at greater risk of needing to use a food bank.



COMMUNITY

We see relationships as really important and recognise the contribution they make to alleviating poverty and improving wellbeing, personally, locally, and nationally.



DIGNITY

We are convinced that everyone is worthy of respect and has a part to play. In particular, we are committed to learning from people who have used food banks and ensuring that - where they wish to - they have opportunities to make their voices heard.

These values have deep roots in the Christian faith, and churches play a vital part in the food bank network. Importantly, they are also values that bring together people of no religious faith and of other religions, providing a shared basis upon which to work together for change.

HOW FOOD BANKS WORK

Food banks in the Trussell Trust network rely on the support of local communities to help end hunger. Non-perishable food is donated by the public at a range of places, such as schools, churches, and businesses, as well as supermarket collection points. It is then sorted into emergency food parcels by volunteers, to be given to people in crisis.

Professionals such as health visitors, schools, and social workers identify people in crisis and issue them with a food bank voucher. This means people can receive a parcel of three days' emergency food from their local food bank. Research has shown that the average weekly income for people referred to a food bank is just £50 after housing costs and 94% meet the criteria for destitution.

Usually, people receiving support from a food bank visit the food bank centre in person, where they will be offered refreshments and an opportunity to chat with a volunteer. Food banks also provide additional support and signposting to services that can help people address some of the causes of their crisis, and the data they collect helps inform national campaigns for long-term change.

Since the start of the pandemic, food banks in the Trussell Trust network have dealt with huge increases in need for their services, as well as having to rapidly adapt their ways of working. This report documents the Trussell Trust's response to the crisis thus far.



SETTING OUT THE CHALLENGE

At the beginning of the coronavirus pandemic, together with our Foodbank Network we faced a series of challenges that needed to be overcome in order to sustain support for people in crisis in a rapidly changing context.

The main challenges included:

- **Food supplies:** Food banks in our network rely on food donations from the public. With people out and about less, and supermarkets struggling to maintain stock and limiting bulk purchases, there was a risk that supplies would run low.
- **Volunteers and staff:** Around 51% of regular volunteers at food banks in the Trussell Trust network are over 65.* With many people needing to shield or self-isolate due to age, underlying health conditions, or coronavirus symptoms, as well as people with school-age children needing to provide childcare, the possibility of a shortage of volunteers and staff across the network was a pressing issue.
- **Keeping people safe:** Usually, food banks aim to be welcoming places in which people can have a cup of tea, chat, and interact with one another. The risk of spreading coronavirus meant that to keep volunteers, staff, and people using food banks safe, we needed to rapidly develop new ways of operating that incorporated social distancing and enabled people to access support without leaving their homes.
- **Increased need:** It quickly became clear that the impacts of coronavirus on many people's financial circumstances would be substantial. We therefore needed to support food banks to prepare for an increase in the number of people being referred for emergency food parcels. It was also important for us to be able to measure this change, so that we could provide accurate evidence to inform and influence policy makers' responses and decision-making.

Tackling these challenges required creativity, rapid decision-making, and collaborative working, internally, across the Foodbank Network, and with partners of many kinds. This report describes our response to these challenges, and the difference this has made so far.



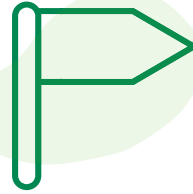
*Based on a survey completed by 2,800 food bank volunteers in the Trussell Trust network in June and July 2020.

OUR RESPONSE IN NUMBERS



1,239,399

emergency food parcels provided to people in crisis by food banks in our network between April and September 2020.



19,000 CALLS

taken by our national helpline, enabling more than 22,000 people to access emergency food support via this newly-established referral pathway.



OVER £2 MILLION

in grant funding distributed to food banks, enabling them to adapt their services and provide additional support during the pandemic.



OVER 250,000
E-REFERRALS

made to food banks in our network, ensuring the access to emergency food could be sustained while referral partners worked remotely.



2,600

emergency food parcels were provided for children every day on average by food banks in our network during the first six months of the pandemic.



£63 MILLION

in additional funding for local authorities in England, influenced in part by our policy and campaigns activity.

STAYING OPEN, STAYING SAFE

Having sought the views of food banks in our network, it was clear from a very early stage that they wanted to keep operating and were committed to being there for people in their communities who needed their support as the pandemic took hold. As such, our role at the Trussell Trust was to do everything we could to resource and support them in this, as well as making sure that the levels of poverty they were witnessing were brought to the attention of government and the wider public.

A vital early step was to secure clarification from the Government that food banks would be deemed an essential service, giving food bank staff and volunteers key worker status and enabling them to remain open during lockdown.

STAYING UP TO DATE

It quickly became apparent that this was to be a fast-changing situation. Staying on top of rapidly evolving government guidance and establishing its implications for food banks was to be a major undertaking. Producing a daily coronavirus bulletin for the Foodbank Network became part of the rhythm of our early response to the pandemic. The team worked diligently to review updates to the guidance across each of the four UK nations, establish what was relevant to food banks, and distil this information into an accessible form. As changes became less frequent, the frequency of these communications reduced, but they continued to be a greatly valued resource for food banks, saving time and enabling them to make more confident decisions about the best course of action. An extensive coronavirus FAQ document provided an ever-growing one-stop-shop of information and resources that food banks might need to inform and support their work in the light of the pandemic.

“The updates that you’ve been sending weekly were really helpful to focus on what we needed to be looking at and what guidelines and procedures we should consider. That was extremely helpful, and also getting the support and updates from our Area Manager and other food banks has been helpful. Even if there’s no solution, it’s just nice to know someone else is in the same situation.

Norwich Foodbank

”

“The advice and support provided by the Trussell Trust both nationally and locally has been invaluable over the last six months, in fact it is difficult to know how we would have dealt with the effects of the pandemic without their guidance.

Ammanford Foodbank

”

A PHONE CALL AWAY

Our Network Services team provides support to food banks in our network, including over the phone and by email. They also handle enquiries from the public and other agencies. During the early weeks of the pandemic, they received an exceptionally high volume of queries. Food banks especially valued this support at a time when they were having to make many decisions in a rapidly changing environment characterised by considerable uncertainty.

Between March and September 2020, the Network Services team handled over 14,500 email enquiries and over 4,400 phone calls. To help deal with the extra demand, a team of nine customer service volunteers was recruited in July. In September, a digital hub was launched, giving food banks access to a wide range of cloud-based resources, bringing together all the information and tools they needed in one place.

CHURCH SUPPORT

Local churches play a major part in our food bank network. Around 12,000 churches are actively involved in some way, including by donating food and providing venues, volunteers and financial support.

More than 800 of the food bank centres in our network are based in church buildings, and many churches provide storage space for food supplies. As churches stopped meeting for public worship, we worked closely with senior denominational and church network leaders to ensure that - whilst buildings were closed for other purposes - they were in most cases able to remain open for food bank use throughout the pandemic.

In some cases, additional space was made available to assist with social distancing and enable larger donations of food to be stored. This was a vital step in enabling food banks to stay open, and we are deeply grateful for the encouragement and support extended by church leaders, nationally and locally.

The Edinburgh Food Project runs three food banks in the Trussell Trust network: Edinburgh North West, Edinburgh Central, and Edinburgh East.

Very early in the pandemic, they realised that people were stopping coming to their food banks, not because they didn't need food but because they didn't want to leave their houses. In response, they pivoted quickly to a delivery model. To make this possible, they contracted a local events company, which had many staff on zero-hour contracts, without work for them to do. In this way, they were able to generate employment for people who would otherwise have had no work, whilst also getting emergency food parcels to people who were unable to afford food in a Covid-19 secure way.

Prior to the pandemic, a survey had been conducted amongst people using the food banks to find out what kinds of additional support they felt they needed. Mental health support and help with debt, budgeting, and benefits emerged as the priorities and plans had been in place to develop these services at the food bank.

Funding from the Scottish Government has enabled both the provision of mental health support and Benefits, Budgeting and Debt advice to begin, and now additional donated income during the pandemic has meant that two debt advisors have been appointed on permanent contracts to support people using the food banks.

Throughout lockdown, telephone advice services have been in operation. In particular, advisors have been following up with people who have received more than three food bank parcels to ensure they are receiving all the benefits they are entitled to. Often this is not the case, and advisors are able to help with this and assist with accessing crisis loans.

Leeds North & West Foodbank set up a delivery model almost immediately at the start of the pandemic. With many of their volunteers being over 70, they needed to adapt rapidly to the changing situation.

British Gas volunteers supported the food bank with home deliveries initially, with local volunteers subsequently taking on this task.

They saw extraordinary generosity from the public, raising funds to cover the rent for their new warehouse and for the much-needed replacement of their delivery van. This has been crucial in enabling them to continue collecting the generous donations made by members of the public at the various supermarket collection points throughout the pandemic.

Signposting people using the food bank to other services that could help them is normally an important part of what the food bank offers. This has been more challenging at this time, but staff have begun to get in contact with people by phone to do this.

Keeping in touch with regular volunteers who have had to shield and have been unable to help out at the food bank has also been important. Both the food bank staff and volunteer team leaders have done their best to keep in contact by phone and email updates.

KEEPING FOOD BANKS SUPPLIED

Food banks normally rely on locally donated food, meaning that people within communities are supporting each other through donations made at supermarkets, schools, churches, and workplaces, for example.

Recognising that this was likely to be a time of increased need and reduced food donations in local communities, a nationwide approach was taken to boost food bank stocks and make sure that they could continue to serve households that needed their help. This was made possible through the generosity and creativity of existing and new corporate partners.

At the same time, steps were taken to adapt community-based food collections, so that people could continue to contribute in this way. As initial challenges around sourcing items eased, food banks have seen tremendous generosity from local businesses, organisations, and individuals in donating food supplies.

FOOD DONATIONS

Building on a long-standing partnership, Tesco donated £7.5 million worth of food to support food banks in the Trussell Trust network in the early stages of the pandemic. They made an equal donation to FareShare, ensuring that independent food banks and other voluntary sector projects needing food supplies were also supported.

Receiving a donation of this scale made a huge difference to the network's ability to sustain its provision of emergency food over a 12-week period from April onwards.

This impact of this donation was made even greater by the way in which Tesco staff worked closely with us to ensure that the food provided was tailored to food banks' needs, and that it was purchased cost-effectively to make the money go further. In addition, Tesco supplied carrier bags. These are used to pack emergency food parcels and were particularly appreciated by food banks because they were receiving fewer donations of bags from other sources during this period.

Efforts were also made to develop new ways for people to donate to food banks locally during lockdown. Resources were provided to help people organise their own home-based collections, enabling neighbours and friends to drop off food donations in a safe, socially-distanced way.



2,170 TONNES

of food distributed to food banks,
enough for 192,524 three-day
emergency food parcels

(based on a two-person three-day emergency food
parcel using the standard packing list)

“ Last week was great, and we were thrilled with [the] amount of food and with our British Gas driver. He was a real ambassador for the company. The Tesco delivery set up is superb. The guys always ring to give us an idea of when they are coming. Last week's drivers were delightful. The actual food items are great too. This is really helping to keep our stocks up.

Cromer and District Foodbank ”

“ Can I just say thank you for arranging the deliveries of supersize pallets from Tesco - they are most definitely helping us to continue our operations and keeping our food stocks topped up, which is very much appreciated.

Newcastle West End Foodbank ”

“ The initial challenge was the supply of food. We have a really good relationship with Portsmouth City Council who convene a food bank network in the city, and they were able to access a large amount of initial food stock from their catering suppliers, which got us over that initial challenge. Since then we've just seen an overwhelming level of generosity from the community, from individuals, companies, and organisations.

Portsmouth Foodbank ”

FOOD DISTRIBUTION

Having secured this generous donation, a nationwide distribution system needed to be developed to transport the food to food banks.

This step saw us building a logistical partnership with British Gas, which was well-positioned to help us with this logistical and practical challenge.

Volunteers from the British Gas team worked collaboratively with other partners, including Palletforce, XPO, and The Entertainer to coordinate the rapid set-up of a distribution network serving England, Wales, and Scotland. This meant working creatively to repurpose existing resources and processes, and adapting swiftly to unexpected challenges.

The food donation was stored in warehouse space donated by The Entertainer. XPO staff then made the pallets of food into food bank-specific deliveries, which were dispatched to 22 regional storage locations. Each food bank was allocated a British Gas 'local lead' volunteer, and together the team packed and transported food and other essentials from the regional storage locations, delivering it to 391 food banks over a period of three months.

Once at the food banks, British Gas volunteers worked with food bank volunteers and staff to unload and store the food safely. Food banks typically have limited storage space, so being able to deliver the food supplies on a weekly or fortnightly basis and to respond in an agile way to food banks' needs as they changed in real time was crucial to the success of this operation.

This incredible team effort, which drew on support, resources, and expertise from a range of industries, played a pivotal part in sustaining food banks' ability to support people during this phase of the pandemic, and every link in the chain was needed to make it work.

“ We are extremely grateful to British Gas who are providing an outstanding service delivering food parcels to vulnerable and shielding residents in Stockport as well as delivering stocks to our food bank centres.

Stockport Foodbank ”



DELIVERING EMERGENCY FOOD

Usually, people who are referred to the food bank visit the food bank centre in person to collect their food parcel. There, they receive a warm welcome from staff and volunteers and have the opportunity for a chat and signposting to further support while they wait for their food to be prepared. To keep people safe and minimise the spread of coronavirus during the pandemic, most food banks switched to home deliveries, either exclusively or alongside a socially-distanced collection service.

This was an entirely new operating model and, again, food banks and people needing their support benefited greatly from the involvement of our corporate partners in making this rapid adaptation possible. Our team provided food banks with guidance across the wide range of issues that needed to be considered including insurance, safeguarding and maintaining a dignified service to people needing support.



British Gas volunteers supported 118 food banks with home deliveries to people in crisis, delivering over 44,489 food parcels in total between April and July. They not only had local knowledge, training, and experience of lone working and engaging with vulnerable households, but also the ability to deploy vehicles and use the route planning software normally required for their day-to-day work, helping make the rapid transition to home deliveries work smoothly. Most food banks had never done home deliveries until the start of the pandemic, so the support and experience of the British Gas team was greatly appreciated and made a significant impact on food banks' ability to sustain their services without putting staff, volunteers, or people needing their support at unnecessary additional risk.

Some food banks used their own volunteer drivers to deliver parcels to people's homes. To help with effective route planning for multiple deliveries, we worked with Mapbox who provided food banks with free access to their routing tool. The Community Transport Association also encouraged their members to assist local food banks with deliveries, providing valuable support.

HELPING PEOPLE ACCESS SUPPORT

Normally, people needing a food bank's support are referred by a range of professionals including teachers, health care and social workers and staff at advice centres such as Citizens Advice. Having been issued with a voucher, people then attend the food bank in person to collect their emergency food supplies.

During lockdown, many referral partners stopped operating face-to-face services. It was really important, therefore, to ensure that referrals to food banks could be still be accessed in a way that didn't require referral partners, or people needing a food bank's support, to leave their homes.

This was made possible in two main ways. Firstly, the roll out of our existing e-referral system across the food bank network was rapidly accelerated. Secondly – through a partnership with Citizens Advice – a new national helpline was set up, enabling people to access specialist income maximisation support to address the underlying cause of their crisis and a referral to a food bank if needed.

E-REFERRALS

Traditionally, food bank referrals have been made by using paper vouchers. An e-referral system was in place prior to the pandemic, and plans had been in place to roll out adoption of this across the food bank network over a three year period.

Most importantly, making referrals electronically provides quicker and easier access to emergency food for people facing crisis. It also has a number of other benefits: it is more secure; there is no data entry involved for the food bank – freeing up time for other activity; the referral partner can view the most up-to-date information about the food bank's services; and it provides enhanced, real-time data for the purposes of stock management, operational analysis and policy-influencing work. In this context, avoiding or reducing the use of paper vouchers was also a means of preventing the spread of coronavirus.

In March, only 15% of all referrals to Trussell Trust food banks were e-referrals. Use of e-referrals was rapidly accelerated in response to the pandemic such that by June, 50% of referrals made every month were e-referrals. In total more than 250,000 e-referrals have been made during the pandemic so far.

Steps taken to facilitate uptake of this system and ensure that new processes were effectively embedded included:

- 1,000 free tablets and SIM cards were distributed to the food bank network, giving them the hardware to make effective use of the e-referral system.
- Updated resources and guidance to support users
- The Trussell Trust team provided online training for food banks.
- Adding new functions, including automated email notifications of referrals and improved ability to share information with referral agencies about changes to food bank opening hours and home delivery arrangements in response to the pandemic.

NATIONAL HELPLINE

In April, a national helpline was set up in partnership with Citizens Advice (England & Wales) to ensure that people in crisis could access personalised, specialist and timely advice and support.

The helpline is based on an 'advice first' approach, ensuring that people who needed crisis support received specialist income maximisation support as well as being referred to their local food bank where appropriate. The service is designed to complement the face to face advice provision which is delivered across the food bank network.

In its first four weeks, the helpline functioned primarily to make sure that people could access emergency food at a time when many typical referral pathways were unavailable. But by May, it was staffed by specialist advisers, meaning that all callers receive a full benefit check and any wider advice needs such as debt, immigration, or housing are identified. This provides the opportunity for the underlying cause of the crisis a person is facing to be addressed from the outset, helping reduce the need for future food bank support.

Since its launch the helpline team have answered over 19,000 calls and have issued more than 12,000 vouchers. This has enabled more than 22,000 people to access emergency food support. The team has been expanded from 20 to 30 FTE advisers based across 15 Local Citizens Advice Centres in England and Wales to meet demand.



19,000 CALLS

answered and more than 12,000 vouchers issued since the helpline launched.

Citizens Advice and the Trussell Trust were building on partnership foundations already in place, but the pace and scale of the helpline development has demonstrated the shared appetite to support people in crisis, the commitment to collaboration and strategic alignment of the two charities. Initial funding was secured by the Trussell Trust, who have committed to funding it until the end of 2020, with fundraising colleagues from both charities working together to secure monies to continue the service into the future.

We also launched a new partnership with Advice NI from the beginning of August. Advice NI is Northern Ireland's largest advice charity and are uniquely placed to deliver specialist support to help address the underlying causes of crisis. People can call Advice NI's helpline to receive a full benefits check to maximise their income, and for advice on debt and other areas of social welfare law. Callers needing food bank support can also be referred to their local food bank via e-referral. Additionally, Advice NI are also offering a facility for a person already visiting a food bank to request a call back for specialist advice. We are also working closely with advice providers in Scotland to explore the development of appropriate financial inclusion provision there.

SIGNPOSTING AND ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

Offering a warm welcome, a hot drink and a chat is an important part of the support that food banks typically offer to people who come to collect food. The switch to home deliveries and the need to minimise social interaction sadly meant that this aspect of their work had to be suspended. The lack of in-person contact also made it more difficult to effectively signpost people to other services that might be able to help them with some of the difficulties contributing to their crisis.

Some food banks produced signposting leaflets and added information to their websites about other services people might find helpful. Some were also able to provide their existing advice or signposting services over the phone, instead of in person. We also produced national signposting leaflets, tailored to the four nations, that could be included in food parcels, giving details of a range of national helplines including MIND, StepChange, Carers UK and the National Domestic Abuse Helpline. In addition, we provided resources and guidance to help food banks replicate the 'cuppa and chat' they would normally offer in a food bank by including a separate package with teabags, biscuits and a phone number that people receiving a food parcel could call to have a conversation with a volunteer.



“ From the beginning [of the pandemic] we designed a leaflet to go into every parcel, and we gathered leaflets from other organisations as well. They all go into an addressed envelope to the client. It includes a recipe book and signposting information. We also call clients. In May we started phoning clients. They could opt into this as part of the referral process – and pretty much everybody did. So we’re still referring 15-20 people a week to our two Citizens Advice workers and also to the Law Centre.

Hammersmith & Fulham Foodbank ”

“ We’ve changed to a delivery model. We’re missing that interaction, but we are starting to contact anybody who’s been to the food bank, just to make sure they’re getting the help that they need. Whether it is benefits advice, debt advice or some kind of working advice, we try to do it.

Foyle Foodbank ”

“ We have a bespoke partnership with Money Matters to deliver benefit and debt advice in every one of our centres. We’ve had to set that up in a different way to offer the same service to our guests, two extra advisors have been taken on to assist with extra support, we have also taken on extra staff to cover the phones for e-referrals. We have also set up in a way so that we can cover all of our own phone calls to guests, this way it enables us to work in a more holistic way. We put a flyer in each bag to ask people if they need any further support. Guests then contact us, we then triage and assess their needs, we then signpost them on so that they can get that ongoing support.

Stoke-on-Trent Foodbank ”

Gemma* explains the difference getting support meant to her: **“Having the help of the community support worker has helped me to get out of the house. I wouldn’t have gone to the Citizens Advice on my own, I forget what to ask for, she has helped me to do things that I would otherwise ignore.”**

Jim* also received support. Despite his depression, he didn’t think he’d be entitled to claim any benefits. The community support worker encouraged him to apply for disability benefits and linked him up with an advocate to attend the assessment and subsequent appeal. The additional money he and his son now receive every month is making a huge difference: **“Thank you for your help. After nearly a year, I’ve now got a backdated payment for Personal Independence Payments due to my depression.”**

FOOD BANK GRANTS

It became clear very early in the crisis that making additional financial resources available to food banks could help them respond to some of the challenges it was posing. Our team worked fast to put in place two new grants programmes to facilitate this.

An early decision by Asda to donate £2.5 million in support of Trussell Trust's response to the pandemic played an important part in making this possible. £1 million of these monies were allocated to the grant funding pot, to which further generous donations from a wider range of individuals, corporates and trusts were added.

CORONAVIRUS EMERGENCY GRANTS

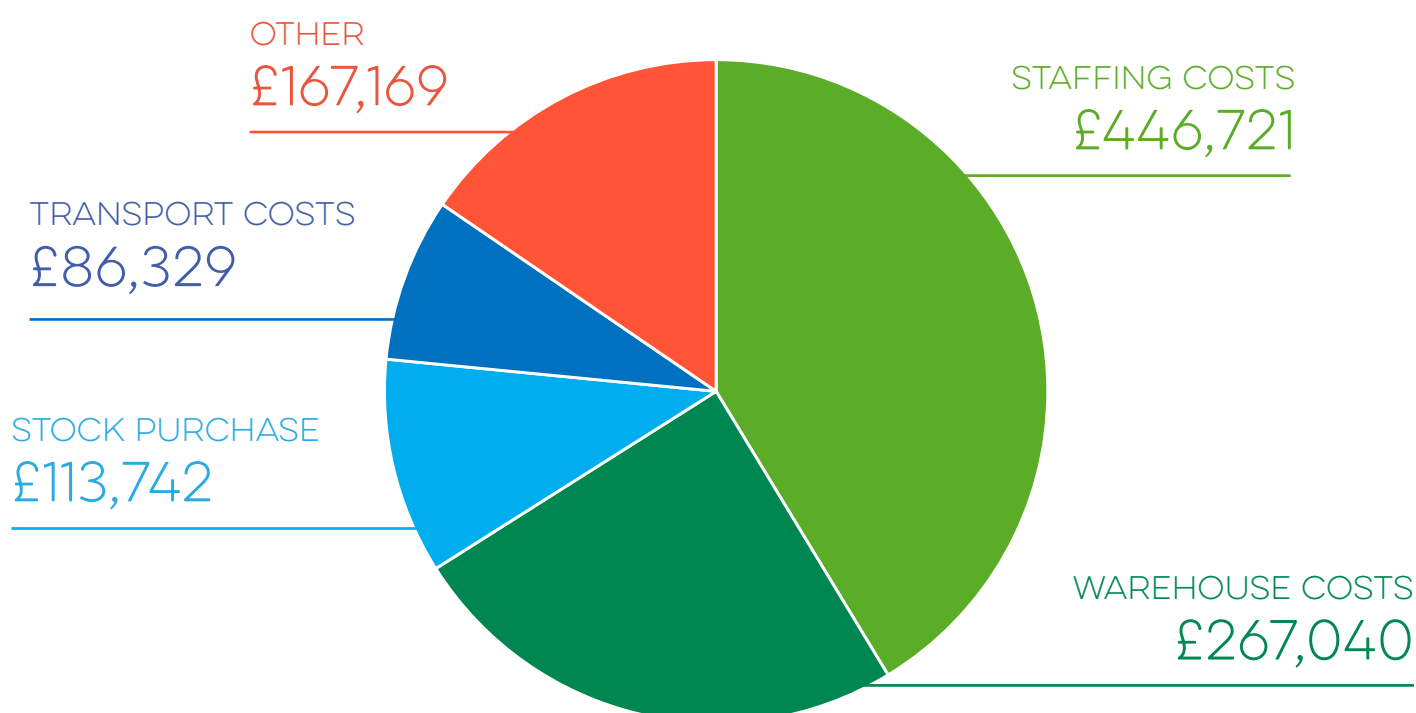
Our Coronavirus Emergency Grants programme opened within weeks of the start of the pandemic, in the same week that the UK-wide lockdown was first announced.

Applications began arriving immediately and in substantial volume. With the maximum award being £5000, the programme was designed to release funds to food banks rapidly in line with local needs. Decisions were made within one to two days of receiving an application, and grants provided within a week.

Food banks used the grants to cover costs such as:

- short-term staffing to cover key personnel who were needing to shield or self-isolate
- additional warehouse space and equipment needed to adapt to social distancing requirements and store bulk donations;
- signage and protective equipment
- purchasing stocks of food and other essentials
- transporting food donations and deliveries.

In total 379 applications were received from 230 food banks – more than half of the food banks in the network. 326 grants were awarded, the average value of which was £3,432. The total value of the grants distributed as part of this emergency response programme was £1,118,814.



CORONAVIRUS RECOVERY GRANTS

By July, applications to the Coronavirus Emergency Grants programme were beginning to slow down, with food banks having made the adaptations necessary to meet the immediate challenges.

The focus then shifted to resourcing food banks to develop and organise their work in ways that respond pro-actively to the ongoing impacts of the pandemic.

The Coronavirus Recovery Grants programme was established, targeting funding towards two priority areas of work:

- **Income maximisation:** Responding to increasing levels of unemployment and income insecurity by giving people using food banks access to specialist benefits advice and debt advice. Work funded under this stream will help people deal with the severe impacts that the pandemic is having on household finances.
- **Volunteer development:** With large numbers of new volunteers having joined food banks during the pandemic, funding is being made available for training and support including on topics such as safeguarding, manual handling, health and safety, and mental health.

So far, 65 Coronavirus Recovery Grants have been made with a total value of £1,054,871. This funding will play an important part in sustaining and developing food banks' capacity as they respond to the medium- and longer-term impacts of the pandemic.

We are very grateful to the corporate partners, charitable foundations and philanthropic individuals who have made this aspect of our response possible.

“The grant funding we have received from the Trussell Trust has been an incredible support to us at Cardiff Foodbank. It has enabled us to purchase additional warehouse resources to help with the transport and movement of food stock across the city. The funding has also meant we were able to increase staffing hours for six months to manage the both the increase and changes we have seen operationally.”

Cardiff Foodbank



VOLUNTEERING

Volunteers are absolutely crucial to the food bank network: without them it could not function. The roles that volunteers fulfil are varied. They include working in the warehouse to sort and store food, packing food parcels, welcoming people using the food bank, managing volunteers, administration, serving as trustees and providing signposting to other services. Some food banks are entirely volunteer run and have volunteer food bank managers. At the outset of the pandemic it was anticipated that with people needing to provide childcare, or shield or self-isolate due to their age, underlying health conditions, or coronavirus symptoms, maintaining sufficient volunteer levels to run food banks would be a major challenge.

Food banks reacted to this by using local networks and relationships to recruit new volunteers. This was extremely successful, and reflects the reputation, resilience and resourcefulness of food bank teams across the UK. Food banks frequently have waiting lists for volunteers in normal times, and with many people being furloughed, together with a strong public attitude to help out at this time of crisis, gaps were readily filled. In addition, lots of existing volunteers stepped into new or additional roles as circumstances required.

The Trussell Trust also responded proactively to recruit volunteers nationally via our website. Due to the success of food bank's own efforts to recruit volunteers, coupled with an overwhelming level of public concern and appetite to help, in many cases it was not possible to place people who expressed an interest in volunteering in a local food bank. However, 4,333 people of those who came forward have become social media volunteers, or got involved with Time for Trussell, our micro-volunteering programme, enabling them to support our work from their own homes.

To facilitate the recruitment of new volunteers during this time, we brought forward the launch of our web-based volunteering platform, Assemble. This enables food banks to easily advertise and recruit to specific volunteer roles, as well as enabling them to manage volunteers and communicate with them more easily.

Corporate volunteering also played a vital part in our coronavirus response, with British Gas volunteers in particular playing a major role in distributing bulk food donations across Britain and supporting food banks with home deliveries.

Whilst this has been a very challenging and busy time for food bank staff and volunteering, it has been incredible to see the way in which people have pulled together to make a difference. Feedback suggests that volunteers have also found it rewarding to have a way of contributing and connecting to others at this time.

Volunteers at Lewisham Food Bank describe what it has meant for them to volunteer during the pandemic:

“As siblings who grew up in Lewisham, it’s rewarding to work with an amazing team to help bring something to the community during these difficult times.”

Gemay and Savash

“I am SO lucky to have found such rewarding duties during these uncertain times, and doubly lucky to be doing this work surrounded by and supported by so many wonderful caring people. The team here is lovely from top to bottom, and my new friends bring a smile to my face every time I step into the food bank.” Judith

“I’ve found the experience so inspiring. It’s been amazing to see so many local people from all walks of life pitching in together to help their community during this crisis.” Catherine

The support of companies like Deloitte has been invaluable in recent months.

Deloitte's work on financial inclusion aligns closely with our goals and in addition to supporting the Trussell Trust with a financial donation, Deloitte has provided valuable training and support to our Operations team and Senior Leadership Group.

Hannah Lewold, a manager in Deloitte's Risk Analytics practice, and Alan Velecky, Senior Manager, Consulting, both joined the Trussell Trust on secondment at the beginning of the pandemic. Taking on tasks like providing templates for Memorandums of Understanding, coaching Area Managers, and working on site to assist with logistics and volunteer management, their support has been crucial.

For Alan, his background in leadership development allowed him to support the Operations team at various levels, and he says "the team has been so welcoming and friendly, they are lovely people to work with. Everyone at the charity has a strong sense of purpose." Hannah, who was based at Brent Foodbank, says "working [there] has opened my eyes to the amount of work the Trussell Trust does to support people who can't afford food in this country."

“

Going into lockdown, I don't know how I would have got through it myself without doing something like this. But that's not just myself, that's 1,500 people who volunteered. I think we would have seen a far greater problem bringing people back into work if we hadn't done this sort of initiative. People are used to being part of a team.

Richard, British Gas volunteer

”

INFLUENCING POLICY

Our values of dignity and justice tell us that it isn't right that anyone should need to use a food bank. Sadly, prior to the coronavirus pandemic, we had already been seeing year on year increases in the need for emergency food across our network. In the last five years, food bank use has increased by 74%. Since the start of the pandemic, we have seen these increases steepen further still.

This doesn't have to be the case - and shouldn't be. Our research, policy and campaigning work uses data and insight gathered from across our food bank network to highlight the drivers of increased food bank use, and influence for change.

MARCH STATISTICS

In early May we released figures that showed that in the last two weeks of March 2020, there was an 81% increase in the number of emergency food parcels provided by Trussell Trust food banks, compared to the same period in the previous year.*

*Food bank centres input their own data into our Data Collection System, and the current external environment has made this more difficult than usual - therefore, it can be difficult to present accurate statistics in a timely way, as there is a time lag during data processing. These figures are based on data provided by 303 of the 425 food bank charities in the Trussell Trust network. These food banks represent 71% of the total network and 70% of people that are provided packages.

This was accompanied by a joint call to the UK Government for a coronavirus emergency income support scheme, backed by a coalition of charities: the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Child Poverty Action Group, Turn2us, StepChange, Children's Society and the Independent Food Aid Network. The scheme set out steps the government should take to support people in or at high risk of financial hardship. It highlighted to the Treasury and other departments the need to protect those who had been immediately and significantly affected by the economic consequences of the pandemic or were at high risk of being so.

APRIL STATISTICS

In June we published data showing that during April 2020, there had been an 89% increase in need for emergency food parcels compared to the same month last year.* This time our policy ask focussed on local welfare assistance funding in England, an important part of the welfare safety net – the nature and sufficiency of which varies significantly from place to place. Through the relationships we have developed with key civil servants and Ministers in a number of departments, we were able to highlight evidence of growing need among people unable to afford food and the need to provide rapid support. This influenced the government's announcement of an additional immediate £63 million in funding for local authorities in England.



£63 MILLION

in additional funding for local authorities in England, influenced in part by our policy and campaigns activity.

SELECT COMMITTEES

We presented evidence to both the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and the Work and Pensions Select Committee. At the former, we highlighted the fact that lack of income, rather than lack of food, was driving increased food bank use – a message that was reflected in the Committee's report, COVID-19 and Food Supply. At the latter, we highlighted the impact of the five week wait for Universal Credit, and the subsequent repayment of advance loans to DWP on people's ability to afford food and other essentials. The Committee's report cited our statistics, referenced the proposed Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme, and quoted Emma Revie's evidence about the detrimental impact of the five week wait and associated advance loans.

RESEARCH AND FORECASTING

Working with researchers from Herriot-Watt University and the National Institute for Economic and Social Research, in September we published a report entitled: Lockdown, lifelines, and the long haul ahead. The analysis set out in this report projects a 61% increase in food bank parcels needed across our network from October to December 2020. This equates to six parcels being given out every minute.

The report also showed that during the start of the pandemic, around half of households who used a food bank had never needed one before. Alongside this, new survey findings highlighted some of the circumstances faced by people using Trussell Trust food banks.

We used this new evidence to highlight the risks associated with mass unemployment and to urge the government to take steps to prevent a surge in destitution through the Comprehensive Spending Review and budget. The findings were covered extensively in the media and were raised in Parliament several times, including at Prime Minister's Questions.

*These food banks represent 82% of those in the network and, in normal times, they feed 82% of those who need a Trussell Trust food bank. The figures are based on data provided by 351 of the 425 food bank charities in the Trussell Trust network.

CAMPAIGNING FOR CHANGE

As well as influencing politicians directly, our campaigning activity mobilises people across the UK to get involved in speaking out about the causes of poverty and what local and national governments can do to make a difference.

Since the start of the pandemic, we have launched two new campaigning activities. The first encouraged people to contact their MP and ask them to write the Chancellor, asking him to ensure that everyone is able to 'stay afloat' financially during the crisis, by backing our Coronavirus Emergency Income Support scheme.

The second focused on ensuring that local authorities in England have enough funding to provide emergency cash grants. Supporters wrote to Robert Jenrick, the government minister responsible for local councils in England, urging him to act to make sure that sufficient funding was provided.

In total, more than 5,400 of these campaign actions were taken by the public between March and September, adding to the influence of our media coverage and direct engagement with parliamentarians.

Drew, who has needed to use a food bank, explains some of the problems he has encountered with the social security system: **"I think [Universal Credit] is ridiculous because what you get paid every month, how is that meant to last families? They need to do it every fortnight, how it used to be. People have got bills to pay, nothing's free, and how are you meant to live on what you're meant to get every month? When I was working I was paid monthly, but that was easy because I was getting more money and I knew how to budget. But now it's just ridiculous. You haven't got the money to budget."**

SHARING THE STORY

INFORMATION AND ENCOURAGEMENT

As soon as the pandemic hit, we saw a wave of public interest in what was happening at food banks, and we worked with major national broadcast, online and print news outlets to ensure that information about how to get help at a food bank and how to support food banks was up to date and widely available.

We kept a steady stream of positive content on our channels, pointing to the generosity and compassion being shown by communities, businesses and individuals across the country – highlighting the support given by a wide range of groups and individuals, from local schools, companies, and churches, through to singer-songwriter Liam Payne and the band Snow Patrol.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE PROBLEM

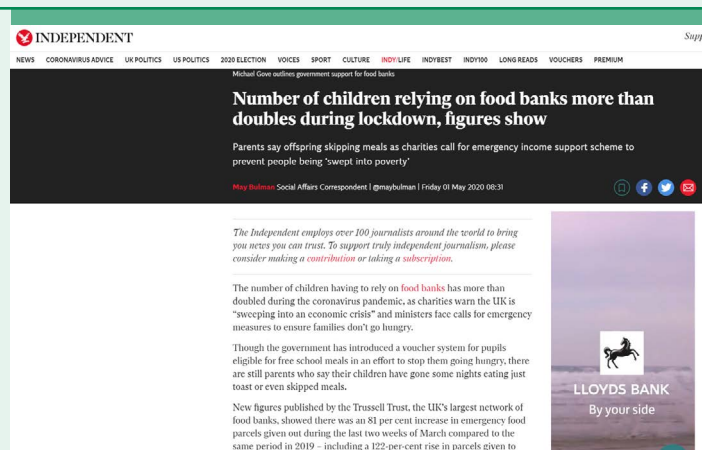
Coverage of our food bank statistics releases helped draw public and political attention to the increasing numbers of people that were experiencing crisis and needing support from a food bank. In May, we secured widespread coverage about the late March spike in food bank use in a range of media outlets. This amounted to almost 1,300 pieces of coverage across three days with a total news reach of over 68 million people.

In June our figures on food bank use during April again achieved media coverage from a wide range of outlets. This time, we received almost 650 pieces of coverage across two days with a total news reach of over 46 million people.

With a mix of hard-hitting news stories and compelling features, the coverage was impactful and included influential outlets such as the Financial Times, The Times, The Telegraph, and BBC. During the pandemic, we have also been able to engage with new audiences through publications such as Grazia, Vogue and Marie Claire.

Coverage of our statistics featured in:

- The Times' Red Box
- BBC News at One
- Evening Standard
- iNews
- Mail Online
- Guardian
- Financial Times
- The Independent
- Channel 4 News
- Mirror
- Press Association
- 5News
- BBC News Channel
- Sky News
- PoliticsHome
- Metro
- New Statesman
- ITV Lunchtime News
- ITV News
- BBC News Scotland
- The Herald
- Evening Telegraph



LOOKING AHEAD

A huge amount has been achieved in the months since the pandemic began.

Looking back to the challenges identified at the start of this report, and at the start of the pandemic, we are pleased to have been able to rise to each of these together with our food bank network and through new and existing partnerships beyond that.

Food supplies have kept pace with unprecedented increases in need; sufficient volunteer numbers have been maintained; Covid-19 secure processes have been developed and put in place both to support referrals to food banks and the distribution of food; and we have continued to raise awareness and influence government decisions about increasing levels of poverty and food bank use in the context of coronavirus.

But it would not have been possible to overcome the challenges without the tremendous commitment and hard work of food bank staff and volunteers. Nor would it have been possible without the generous support of our corporate partners, charity partners, churches and the general public. We know that these partnerships – and the energy and creativity they embody – will continue to be vital to our response moving forwards.

Much remains to be done, of course. Individuals, communities and our economy continue to feel the effects of the pandemic, which continues to take away and disrupt lives and livelihoods across the country. Our research tells us that food bank use is likely to continue to increase over the winter. We will respond to this by ensuring that our network has the best support we can provide to keep serving people who are in crisis – and we know that the food banks in our network will continue to provide compassionate and committed support in communities across the country.

However, even in the context of a pandemic, it isn't right that people are needing to use a food bank to access the basic essentials of life. We will therefore also respond by continuing to advocate for policies that prevent people from falling into destitution, and by working to deepen and extend public support for the idea that the UK should be a society in which no-one needs to use a food bank.





www.trusselltrust.org

Trussell Trust Reg. Charity in England & Wales (1110522) and Scotland (SC044246). Reg. Ltd. Co. in England & Wales (5434524)