



## PRESS RELEASE

### **Department of Work and Pensions bans Job Centres from giving Charity food vouchers to families waiting for benefits.**

Families waiting for their benefits to be paid and with no money to buy food are no longer able to be referred to a **foodbank** for emergency food by Job Centres as a result of a new directive by the DWP. Having no money for food is a disaster for families and it is devastating when they are told there is nothing further the Job Centre can do, especially at Christmas.

In Salisbury and other towns where there are **foodbanks**, front line care professionals and staff in charities and agencies like Job centres, Social Services and Health Visitors hold **foodbank** vouchers to issue to their clients who are in crisis. These vouchers are exchanged for 3 days worth of emergency food at the **foodbank**, where they also receive support and signposting to other organisations able to provide longer term support.

“Benefit delay is the greatest problem faced by families in crisis, and this represents between 35 to 50% of all clients referred” says Chris Mould, Director of The Trussell Trust which heads the **foodbank network** across the UK. “We cannot understand why Job Centres have been directed not to work with front line charities in this way. We’ve worked together effectively for years and this change has come about without any consultation or warning at all. Whilst we realise that there is an inevitable time delay between the benefit application and payment, for those with no immediate means, the possibility of quick access to emergency food brings immediate relief and can take the hurt and anger out of a desperate situation. Front line care workers, including Job Centre Staff, welcome the ability to refer people to the **foodbank** as they know that once there they will be provided for in a timely and caring manner. It is all the more troubling that this directive from on high has come during a period when so many people are facing financial crisis and in the lead up to Christmas.”

### **Notes to the editor:**

- Foodbanks across the UK have seen an increase in the number of people coming to them as a result of the ‘credit crunch’. Salisbury foodbank has seen a 15% increase in clients over the last three months.
  - Seven new **foodbank** projects have opened in the UK this autumn in Ebbw Vale, Exeter, Haverhill, Lincoln, Okehampton, Waterside and Plymouth, making a total of 23.
  - 33 **foodbank** projects have been launched across the UK since The Trussell Trust set up the **foodbank** network in 2004: 10 projects are still in development and training.
  - The **foodbank** gives nutritionally balanced food parcels to people experiencing crisis. Food is issued using a voucher system: recognised front line care professionals issue food vouchers to their clients that are then redeemed at the **foodbank**.
  - **Foodbanks** like Salisbury also run a Christmas Foodbox scheme.
  - The **foodbank** in Salisbury received the Queen’s Golden Jubilee Award in 2003. 3000 people in Salisbury alone received emergency food from their **foodbank** last year
  - Dr John Sentamu, Archbishop of York, says the **foodbank** ‘is a model I hope to see spread more widely throughout the country’.
  - With nearly a million rural households and over 3 million children still living in poverty across the UK, every day huge numbers of people go without food.
  - Real life stories showing how the **foodbank** can turn lives around include: A family in an isolated village in rural Wiltshire facing bankruptcy and with no money to run the car or feed themselves received some emergency food boxes to keep them going. A couple desperate for food in a South West town were caught shoplifting by the police and taken to the **foodbank** instead of the police station.
  - The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity working with marginalised people in Salisbury, the UK and Bulgaria.
- Ends.

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