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FOODBANKS TO LAUNCH RADICAL 'FINANCIAL TRIAGE' PROGRAMME



Foodbank charity the Trussell Trust is to launch pilot funded by a 6-figure personal donation from Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis.



This pioneering idea is a response to the alarming increase in people being referred to foodbanks in severe financial difficulty. The scheme could revolutionise how the UK's leading foodbank charity works and will see foodbanks partner with debt and money-management charities to provide instant financial help to people in foodbanks at the point of crisis.

The pilot is announced as new research shows that more than one in ten UK families have taken out a pay day loan to make ends meet in the last year (12%) and a quarter (24%) of UK families have fallen into debt to be able to provide for the family. Over 900,000 people received three days' emergency food from Trussell Trust foodbanks in 2013/14 financial year, 163 percent more than the previous year.

David McAuley, Trussell Trust Chief Executive says:

'It's deeply concerning that the basics of dignified life in modern Britain - food, heat and electricity – can fall out of reach for so many. High prices, static incomes, problems with benefits and harsh welfare sanctioning are forcing people into extreme financial difficulty. When you're facing stark choices between eviction or feeding the family, debt and high interest loans can seem to offer a short term solution, the reality is that this often forces finances to spiral out of control.'

'By introducing a 'financial triage' service in foodbanks, where clients are able to connect with free financial and debt advice, people will be given professional help to manage tight finances, avoid pay

day lenders and structure debt to prevent the situation from getting worse and to help people break out of crisis much faster.'

Martin Lewis' donation, to be supplemented by additional funds from the Trussell Trust, will enable the charity to develop the first stage of a transformative 'more than food' approach to foodbanks, where foodbanks in the pilot project become a 'hub' of local service provision. People in need will be able to access a range of support including emergency food, debt advice and money management all in one location, removing access barriers and cutting down waiting times.

Connecting people with financial support at the point of crisis will also help reduce the workloads of already over-stretched debt and money-management charities by helping to decrease the number of people developing complex and entrenched financial problems.

Despite the evidence of economic recovery, the benefits are not yet filtering down to people living on the breadline. Life is not likely to get easier for the poorest anytime soon which is why finding innovative ways to help people living on low-incomes is urgent.

Martin Lewis says:

"The hope is that this scheme will provide a financial equivalent of 'give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime'. I've been campaigning for financial education in schools for years, finally that starts on the curriculum in September, but that still leaves great swathes of our society, especially some of the most needy struggling with even the basics of money management. "

"Those who go to foodbanks are already open to asking for help. They've rightly prioritised the urgent need to feed themselves and their children. Yet if we can intervene at that point to start to get their financial lives back on track, by approachable, non judgemental help, it will hopefully cut down the number of return visits."

The Trussell Trust runs a network of over 400 foodbanks across the UK that give emergency food and support to people in crisis and, if the pilot is successful, this could be rolled out across the UK in 2015/16.

The pilot scheme will initially be launched in six Trussell Trust foodbanks in different regions of the UK, aiming to improve the financial standing of foodbank users and to improve their household budgetary skills. The scheme will partner with national UK debt charities to offer professional debt counselling services for up to 20 hours a week per centre in each region. The pilot will start in September 2014.

Notes to the Editor

Research was carried out by Censuswide in June 2014 using a sample of 4,000 adults across the UK, 2,000 of whom were parents with children under the age of 16.

About the Trussell Trust:

- Trussell Trust foodbanks provide three days' non-perishable emergency food and support to people in crisis
- The Trussell Trust runs an award-winning network of over 400 community-based foodbanks across the UK
- In 2013/14 financial year Trussell Trust foodbanks gave three days' emergency food to 913,138 people, including over 300,000 children. Numbers helped have increased by 163% in the last year
- 90% food given out by foodbanks is donated by the public and everyone who comes to a foodbank is referred by a frontline care professional, ensuring that the need is genuine
- Find out more: www.trusselltrust.org or facebook: Trusselltrust twitter: @TrussellTrust

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