

EMBARGOED UNTIL 00.01AM THURSDAY 11TH JULY 2013



Increasing numbers turning to foodbanks since April's welfare reforms

The Trussell Trust's latest figures show that proportionately more people are being referred to foodbanks with benefit related problems since April's welfare reforms. This new data comes less than a week after Lord Freud, Minister for Welfare Reform, refuted the link between welfare and people turning to foodbanks. The Trussell Trust is urgently calling on the government to speak to them about how to stop more people facing hunger due to welfare problems.

Between 1 April and 30 June 2013, over 150,000 people received three days' emergency food from a Trussell Trust foodbank - 200 percent more than the same period last year. Of those helped during the first quarter of the 2013-14 FY, 52 percent were referred to foodbanks by frontline care professionals due to problems with benefits. During the same period last year, 43 percent of referrals were due to benefits problems. This represents an overall increase of 21 percent in people referred to foodbanks with benefits problems. Breaking this figure down further, the percentage of referrals due to benefit *changes* made a significant jump from 12 percent (first quarter of FY 2012-13) to 19 percent (first quarter of FY 2013-14), whilst increases due to benefit *delays* rose from 31 to 33 percent. Foodbanks are reporting that the main reason for the proportionate increases in referrals due to benefit problems is largely the implementation of April's welfare reforms.

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman Chris Mould says:

'The reality is that there is a clear link between benefit delays or changes and people turning to foodbanks, and that the situation has got worse in the last three months. Since April's welfare reforms we've seen more people referred to foodbanks because of benefit delays or changes. Our foodbanks are reporting that many local authorities and agencies are unclear about what help is available to individuals who would previously have been helped by the Social Fund and are consequently giving poor or inappropriate advice to people. We've had people in crisis calling us saying that their local authority told them to ring the foodbank for help with their gas and electric. We're also seeing more people turning to

us who have been sanctioned for seemingly illogical reasons and we're helping people who cannot afford the bedroom tax but are unable to move house.'

We are calling on the government to listen to what's happening on the ground, to realise that when the welfare system breaks down, it means families go hungry. Many of these issues are avoidable but they must be addressed urgently, before universal credit is rolled out in October. This is not about politics, it's about recognising that we're living in a difficult economic climate where more people in poverty are struggling to cope and that we need to work together to find solutions so that the poorest and most vulnerable don't go hungry.'

Last week Lord Freud suggested that the reason for the growth in numbers turning to foodbanks was simply a question of supply – that more foodbanks are opening. Chris Mould responded:

'Last year Trussell Trust foodbanks saw a 76 percent increase in numbers of foodbanks launched, but a 170 percent increase in numbers of people given three days' emergency food. The rise in numbers turning to foodbanks is not a question of supply or people trying to get a free meal. Trussell Trust foodbanks don't operate a 'drop-in' system: everyone who comes to a Trussell Trust foodbank is referred by a trusted and respected frontline care professional such a social worker or parent support advisor, who will first assess the need and issue a voucher. Flatlining incomes, rising living costs and lack of work means that incomes are being squeezed to breaking point. Everything we're seeing and hearing is that problems for people on low incomes are growing and the need is very real. That's why we are pushing for policy makers to speak to us, to meet our clients and to find out what it's like to live on the breadline in Britain today.'

Ends

Notes to the Editor

- Examples of seemingly illogical sanction decisions include a registered blind person sanctioned for failing to attend an interview to become a cleaner in a town 20 miles away from her home; an acutely ill man with stoma and colostomies declared fit for work; a professional couple with children sanctioned when they only turned up to one of the two interviews with JCP that they were given despite the fact that JCP staff had agreed prior to the interviews that there had been

an error and had told them only to attend one; and a woman supported by the foodbank for thirteen weeks because she had no money whilst she waited for her appeal which she then won. The Trussell Trust is in dialogue with other charities that are recording similar issues with the sanctions regime. The problems seem to be common and to apply in England, Wales and Scotland.

- Over 18,000 frontline care professionals refer people to Trussell Trust foodbanks and assess the nature of the crisis, of which more than 50 percent are public sector workers.
- 49,596 people received three days' emergency food from Trussell Trust foodbanks between 1 April and 30 June in 2012; compared to 152,154 in the same period in 2013, an increase of over 200 percent. At the end of June 2013 there were 40 percent more Trussell Trust foodbanks launched than at the end of June 2012.
- [Research](#) released last week by The Trussell Trust in partnership with Tesco and FareShare shows that one in five UK parents have struggled to provide enough food for their children in the last six months
- The Trussell Trust was recently voted 'Most Admired Charity 2013' by charity and not-for-profit CEOs across the UK at Third Sector's 'Britain's Most Admired Charities' Awards.
- The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity that partners with churches and communities to open foodbanks that provide three days nutritionally balanced non-perishable food to people in crisis.
- Foodbanks help to prevent housing loss, mental health problems, family breakdown and crime. As well as providing emergency food, foodbanks also signpost clients to other agencies able to help resolve the underlying cause of the crisis.
- Over 90% food given out by foodbanks is donated directly by the public. In 2012-13, 3,492.44 tonnes of non-perishable food was donated. Foodbank recipients are referred by a frontline care professional such as a doctor, social worker, CAB, Jobcentre Plus or schools liaison officer. Over 15,000 frontline care professionals across the UK referred clients to foodbanks in 2012-13, 50 percent of which are statutory agencies.
- In 2008-09 Trussell Trust foodbanks gave three days emergency food to 26,000 people nationwide; in 2009-10: 41,000 were helped; in 2010-11: 61,468; in 2011-12: 128,697; in 2012-13: 346,992.

- Foodboxes contain at least three days' supply of non-perishable foods such as tinned fruit, vegetables, meat and fish as well as pasta, cereal, UHT milk, sauces, tea, long-life juice. The Trussell Trust works with dieticians to ensure that foodboxes are nutritionally balanced.
- Foodbank clients can receive a maximum of three consecutive foodbank vouchers (each voucher can be redeemed for at least three days food), although longer term support is available at the discretion of the foodbank manager.
- The Trussell Trust has launched 374 foodbanks across the UK in locations ranging from the Cotswolds to Tower Hamlets. Three new foodbanks are currently opening every week. The Trussell Trust estimates that there would need to be 750-1,000 foodbanks to provide for people in crisis across the UK. Thousands of people are facing hunger today in towns with no foodbanks.
- The Trussell Trust receives no government funding and relies entirely on the generosity of the public, businesses and charitable trusts.
- The Trussell Trust is a-political.
- For more on foodbanks visit: www.trusselltrust.org/foodbank-projects
- The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity that partners with local communities to provide practical, non-judgemental help to people in crisis in the UK and Bulgaria: www.trusselltrust.org

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