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Overview

In the UK, more than 14 million people are living in poverty, this includes 4.5 million children.

The roll out of Universal Credit has, in particular, impacted on the lives of low income families in the UK. Food banks in 2018 were seeing on average a 30% increase, for the needs of their essential services, in the areas where Universal Credit had been rolled out fully.

The Trussell Trust

The Trussell Trust

(www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/?gclid=EAlaIQobChMIocO1kevp4QIVCbDtCh2pyAebEAAYASAAEglI05fd_BwE) is a registered charity and their aim is to support a nationwide network of food banks and together they provide emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaign for change to end the need for food banks within the UK.

The trust reported that their network had provided 658,048 emergency supplies to people in crisis between the period of April and September 2018. This was a 13% increase for the same period in 2017.

Foodbank referral system

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There are over 2,000 food banks in operation across the UK and over 600 of them are running independently of the Trussell Trust network.

The food banks liaise with professionals, such as doctors, health visitors, social workers, the police, Citizens Advice as well as many other agencies, who will refer people on using a voucher system. This means that GP surgeries are actually prescribing food, and almost 54,000 professionals working on the frontline have referred people in need to their local food banks.

The Trussell Trust network reports that the main reasons that people are being referred to food banks is; 'low income-benefits or not earning', 'benefit delays', 'benefit changes' and 'debt'.

When you approach a referral agency they will discuss your problems and if the situation warrants emergency food provision, they will issue a voucher to you. The voucher is taken to a food bank and redeemed for a three-day emergency food parcel. The parcel will contain 'nutritionally balanced' 'non-perishable' items.

Volunteers will usually offer advice and will direct you to charities and other suitable agencies that could help you tackle your problems long-term.

Food parcels

A typical food parcel includes: cereal, soup, pasta, rice, tinned tomatoes/ pasta sauce, lentils, beans and pulses, tinned meat, tinned vegetables, tea/coffee, tinned fruit, biscuits, UHT milk, and fruit juice. The majority of food banks will also provide essential non-food items such as toiletries, hygiene products, sanitary protection and nappies. Some food banks also have the facilities to provide fresh produce.

Dietary needs

If you or your family have specific dietary requirements or allergies a volunteer at your local food bank will run through the food parcel packing list with you to check any special dietary needs you may have.

Food donations

There are over 40,000 volunteers across the UK who will sort through donated goods and help prepare the emergency food parcels donated by the public. Collection points for donated goods can usually be located at supermarkets, schools, churches and local businesses.

Food banks rely heavily on the generous support of local communities and this goes a long way in helping to stop UK hunger. You should check with your local food bank first, if you are organising a

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collection point, and you will be advised of the items in particular they are currently in need of.

Finding your nearest Foodbank

The Trussell Trust website has a function enabling people to search for their nearest foodbank. Visit: www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/

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