



The Rt Honourable Boris Johnson MP
The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

Cc: Nicola Sturgeon MSP, Arlene Foster MLA, Mark Drakeford MS, Rishi Sunak MP, Dr
Thérèse Coffey MP, Robert Jenrick MP, Michael Gove MP, George Eustice MP, Matt Hancock
MP

9 July 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) member organisations run independent food banks and other food aid providers operating across the UK. We are writing to urge you to take immediate and urgent action to reduce the rapidly growing number of people needing our support because they are unable to afford to buy food.

IFAN's latest figures show a % increase in the number of people supported with 3-day emergency food parcels compared to May of last year. And we know that worse is still to come.

3.2 million people have claimed Universal Credit since the start of lockdown in March. The Job Retention Scheme, which has been very welcome, is due to close at the end of October. The coming recession is forecast to be the worst on record and redundancies are becoming commonplace. The national school meal replacement schemes will only help to support some of the millions of children in need over the summer holidays. All this is on top of a poverty crisis that pre-existed COVID-19.

We welcome the £63 million fund for England's local authorities, the school meal voucher schemes, and the £16 million fund for food charities. We also welcome the COVID-19 related funding provided in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. However, these temporary provisions unfortunately do not measure up to the scale of the social, health and economic crisis unfolding across the UK.

The people we support need our help principally because they cannot afford to buy food. For the vast majority, the financial crisis they are facing simply will not be resolved by the temporary supply of emergency food parcels. First and foremost, the problem that needs to be addressed is escalating poverty.

We would like to ask you to consider the introduction of measures which would see:

- waiting time for Universal Credit removed, so that advance payments are no longer loans;
- the end of the sanctions system;
- the removal of the benefit cap;
- the removal of the two-child limit;
- the end of zero-hour contracts;
- the increase of Child Benefit by £10 a week;
- the permanent suspension of No Recourse to Public Funds status;
- and a Real Living Wage;

These changes would help to significantly reduce the financial strain that millions of people across the UK are experiencing. The well-documented, long-term impact of poverty is devastating. At present, millions of children and adults are seeing their futures blighted as a result of inadequate incomes and insufficient benefit payments.

We urge you no longer to rely on the compassion of volunteers to fill an ever-growing gap when appropriate benefits and incomes related to the cost of living should be accessible to all. Many of our teams have been running beyond capacity for months as we have responded to the immediate crisis in extremely challenging circumstances - but the lifting of lockdown does not signal a reprieve for us. Unless decisive action is taken, we know that millions of people will continue to face poverty in the coming months and that millions more will join them.

Food banks and thousands of other food aid organisations provide vital support in communities across the UK but they should not be relied on to continue to pick up the pieces.

Yours sincerely,

The Independent Food Aid Network

Action Force Community Group (Luton)

Active Christians Homeschool Social Enterprise (Sandwell)

Ardwick & Longsight Food Bank (Manchester)

Ashton Churches Together Foodbank (Wigan)

AY Group Community Services CIC (Hammersmith and Fulham)

Aylesbury Vineyard Storehouse (Buckinghamshire)

BASICS Food Bank (Lanarkshire)

Batley Food Bank (Kirklees)

Be Enriched (Wandsworth)

Bow Food Bank (Tower Hamlets)

Brandlesholme Community Centre & Foodbank (Bury)

Brechin Community Pantry (Angus)

Carlisle Food Bank (Cumbria)

Central Southwark Community Hub (Southwark)

Centrepont Food Bank (Westminster & Haringey)

CEYP Eltham & Mottingham Community Foodbank (Greenwich)

Compassion Food Bank (Manchester)

Divine Rescue (Camden)

EATS Rosyth (Fife)

Edible Links (Warwickshire)

EK Community Foodbank (South Lanarkshire)

Eudaimonia Super Kitchen (Nottinghamshire)

Fair Frome (Somerset)

Feeding Gainsborough CIC (Nottinghamshire)

Friends of the Homeless (Hampshire)

Granville Community Kitchen (Brent)

Hambleton FoodShare (North Yorkshire)

Hereford FoodBank (Herefordshire)

Holbeach Community Larder (Lincolnshire)

Holy Trinity Food Bank (Haringey)

Inspiring Grace (Lancashire)

Kirkcaldy Food Bank (Fife)

Ledbury Food Bank (Herefordshire)

Leominster Community Larder and Food Bank (Herefordshire)

Let's Eat Project (Leeds)

Living Well (Bromley)

LOVE Gorgie (Edinburgh)

Machars Churches Basics Food Bank (Dumfries and Galloway)

Micah Liverpool (Liverpool)

Millfield Community Fridge (Peterborough)

Mission Trinity (Doncaster)
Moray Food Plus (Moray)
Neruka's Soup Kitchen (Leeds)
NewStarts (Birmingham/Worcestershire)
North Oxfordshire Community Food Bank (Oxfordshire)
North Paddington Foodbank (Westminster)
Worthing Food Foundation (Sussex)
Bethnal Green Food Bank (Tower Hamlets)
Kettering Foodbank (Northamptonshire)
Dad's House (Southwark/Kensington)
Northampton Hope Centre (Northamptonshire)
PATCH (Pembrokeshire)
ReadiFood (Reading)
Restore Northampton (Northamptonshire)
Sandbach Food Bank (Cheshire)
Shoreline Church Food Bank (Sefton)
Southampton City Mission (Southampton)
St Paul's Centre (Cheshire)
Stow Park Community Centre (Newport)
Sufra NW London (Brent)
Tay Bridgehead Foodbank (Fife)
The 1010 Trust (South Ayrshire)
The Ascension Churches (Leicester)
The Gate Charity Alloa (Clackmannanshire)
The Glory of Shaddai (Lambeth)
The welcome Centre (Kirklees)
West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare (West Dunbartonshire)