

Rt. Hon. Amber Rudd MP
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions
Department of Work and Pensions
Caxton House, Tothill Street
Westminster, London SW1H 9NA

Cc: Rt. Hon. Michael Gove MP, Cabinet member with responsibility for 'no deal' Brexit preparations

Friday 26 July, 2019

URGENT: Please confirm a national hardship fund to guarantee that vulnerable adults and children will not go hungry in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit

Dear Secretary of State Amber Rudd,

We represent the main networks of organisations that provide food for people most in need in the UK. From April 2018 to March 2019, food banks alone supplied well over 3 million emergency food parcels to people in crisis (roughly a third of these to children). In addition, emergency meal and other food aid providers supported hundreds of thousands of people, providing food for millions of meals to vulnerable people and the frontline community groups that support them (such as homeless shelters, domestic violence refuges, mental health institutions, school breakfast clubs, etc).

We are becoming increasingly concerned about what would happen to the food supplies for these vulnerable people in the event of a no deal Brexit. Our beneficiaries, and the frontline charities that we support, rely on donations from companies and individuals that could easily dry up in the event of the food price rises predicted by the [Governor of the Bank of England](#) and [Cabinet Secretary Sir Mark Sedwill](#) or serious food supply chain disruption. We need to be clear with you that food banks and frontline charities are in no position to respond to such an eventuality, having neither the money nor storage to stockpile food, often being run by volunteers, and many being already over-stretched meeting current need.

You have at least twice made reference in public to the possibility of a national 'hardship fund' to help those most in need, in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit. You told the Work and Pensions Select Committee in March 2019 that DWP was "looking at the possibility" of a national hardship fund and mentioned it again on the BBC's Andrew Marr show mid-July 2019. As a matter of urgency, we ask you to publish details of how such a national hardship fund would be put in place and delivered, to guarantee that vulnerable adults and children will not go hungry in the event of a 'no deal' Brexit. We believe it should include cash payments to guarantee adequate food for the period of disruption (which we understand could be three months or more) as follows:

- As a first priority, cash grants to the increasing number of people trying to manage on a very low income, to ensure that they are able to buy food, with money distributed via suitable public sector institutions, agencies and channels.
- Also, cash grants – again via suitable public sector institutions, agencies and channels – to frontline charities, including homeless shelters, domestic violence refuges and mental health institutions, including those who serve especially vulnerable people living in destitution or with no recourse to public funds.

We commend the recent efforts of several senior civil servants to bring these matters to the attention of the Cabinet-level 'no deal' Brexit contingency committee. With a new government forming, we request your urgent attention to a 'no deal' Brexit food contingency plan for people most in need.

For information, the main signatories to this letter attended a meeting on 8 July 2019 with senior representatives from Defra, Cabinet Office, HM Treasury, MHCLG and DWP to start to discuss the issues touched on in this letter. Our organisations emphasised the vital importance of a 'hardship fund' to reach people and frontline groups most in need. Additional considerations and actions were also raised, including public sector food, on which we and colleagues can brief your department on request.

Yours sincerely,



Lindsay Boswell,
Chief Executive, FareShare



Mark Curtin, Chief Executive,
The Felix Project



Sabine Goodwin, Coordinator,
Independent Food Aid Network



Mary McGrath,
Chief Executive, Food Cycle



Emma Revie,
Chief Executive, Trussell Trust



Laura Winningham, Chief Executive,
City Harvest London



Kath Dalmeny, Chief Executive, Sustain: The alliance for better food and farming, which works with and supports local food partnerships and local food poverty alliances around the UK

For coordination and correspondence: Kath Dalmeny, Sustain, email: kath@sustainweb.org; tel: 020 3559 6777; mobile: 07989 557982

Letter also supported by:



Neel Radia, Chair,
National Association of Care Catering



Stephanie Wood,
Chief Executive, School Food Matters



Tom Andrews,
Director, Sustainable Food Cities



Anna Taylor,
Executive Director, The Food Foundation



Victoria Williams,
Director, Food Matters



Niall Cooper,
Director, Church Action on Poverty



Claire Pritchard,
Chair, London Food Board



James Bielby,
Chief Executive, Federation of Wholesale Distributors



Dr Lindy Sharpe,
Research Fellow, Food Research Collaboration



Andy Jones,
Chair, PSC100 public sector caterers group