



LATEST INDEPENDENT FOOD BANK FIGURES FROM THE INDEPENDENT FOOD AID NETWORK (IFAN)

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- **134 independent food banks distributed a total of 426,958 emergency food parcels between February and October 2020 compared to 226,605 emergency food parcels in the same period last year - a rise of 88%**
- **Independent food banks report a 62% increase in emergency food parcel distribution comparing October 2020 with the same month last year**
- **From February to April 2020 independent food bank use soared by 120%**
- **This data represents a fraction of the independent food bank total - at least 961 independent food banks operate across the UK**
- **IFAN is calling on the UK Government and England's local authorities to take urgent action to reduce the need for food banks and stop the institutionalisation of a charitable food aid system**

Urgent action is needed to significantly reduce the need for charitable food aid provision. The Government's recent pledge of over £400 million to help support families and individuals unable to afford to buy food is most welcome. However, yet again, policy changes that would reduce the need for food banks in the long-term have been avoided.

The provision of yet more emergency food parcels will not solve poverty and a charitable food aid system is being further embedded with every week that passes. We urge the Government to look beyond an emergency response to the systemic problem of poverty that pre-existed the Covid-19 crisis and to make changes to our social security system and to our economy that will mean everyone is able to afford to buy food.

IFAN is calling on the UK Government to:

- make the £20 uplift to Universal Credit permanent and extend it to legacy benefits;
- remove the benefit cap;
- end the 5-week wait for a first Universal Credit payment by removing the loan element of advance payments;
- end the two-child limit;
- end the sanctions system;
- permanently suspend No Recourse to Public Funds status.

In addition, IFAN is calling on local authorities in England to use their share of the recent DWP's £170 million allocation to distribute cash grants to individual and families whenever possible and to avoid bolstering a food aid system in place of a 'cash first' approach.

IFAN member organisations spoke about the latest collated figures:

Charlotte White of the Earlsfield Foodbank said:

"We currently serve 90-100 households per week. This time last year, it was 20-25. Of this increase, the majority are people who have never used food banks before, and we've noticed a significant increase in households with children. Many people are coming to us because of delays or problems with benefits/universal credit, and we're also seeing a big increase in people with low income (often zero-hour) work. We can give people food, but food poverty is a symptom of the problem, not the cause. Until we tackle the underlying structural problems, the situation will worsen."

Paul O'Brien of Micah Liverpool said:

"Micah Liverpool has been supporting an increased number of people since the beginning of the pandemic, with our numbers pre-pandemic being on average 180 a week rising to an average of 300. Since the beginning of December, we have seen a further increase supporting over 350 people in the first week."

Tracy Olin, Pembrokeshire Action To Combat Hardship said:

'Pembrokeshire has been recognised as the worst in Wales for child poverty. At the moment in 5 days we help the same number of people as we would have helped in a month in years gone by.'

Anne McCormack, Broke Not Broken, Perth and Kinross said:

In October this year we distributed 103 parcels compared with 33 the year before, November has seen a huge rise in food bank use. 305 parcels were distributed compared with only 19 the year before. More families are coming forward, we are seeing more redundancies affecting families who were precariously balancing their finances every month. Food bank parcels, whilst certainly useful, are not helping the longer-term issues people are facing. They need real financial help."

James Quayle of North Paddington Foodbank said:

"More people are struggling with higher energy bills, whilst we continue to see new customers needing food who have been struggling for some time but have resisted coming for help."

Sabine Goodwin, Coordinator of the Independent Food Aid Network said:

"Independent food banks are picking up the pieces yet again as more and more people struggle to pay the bills. There needs to be a realisation that we cannot

continue to provide an emergency response to a long-term crisis. The Government's £170 million funding has huge potential to support people through a 'cash first' approach and the provision of cash payments by local authorities instead of food bank referrals. But ultimately it's the social security system and the payment of adequate wages that need our attention to end food poverty for good."

Dr Maddy Power, Co-Chair IFAN's Board of Trustees said:

"The impacts of Covid-19 have been profoundly unequal and nowhere has this been more apparent than in the sharp increases in poverty and hunger caused by the economic fallout of the pandemic. No one should have to use a food bank but at present the welfare system creates rather than prevents poverty. Without significant government action to improve incomes we will become a country in which millions of people are permanently reliant on an already stretched charitable food system for survival."

More about the Independent Food Aid Network:

- The UK-wide [Independent Food Aid Network](#) (IFAN) connects, supports and advocates on behalf of frontline food aid organisations including over 400 independent food banks. IFAN has identified at least 961 independent food banks operating across the UK.
- IFAN envisions a society without the need for charitable food aid.
- Since the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, [independent food banks across the UK](#) have seen a large increase in need for emergency food parcels.
- Since June 2020, IFAN has been running a [Cash First Project](#) in Scotland that is currently being extended to England.
- **For further information please contact Sabine Goodwin at sabine@foodaidnetwork.org.uk or on 07971-010991.**