



IFAN SURVEY NOVEMBER 2022 (11am 16.11.22)

As inflation figures soar, independent food banks are running out of options and say urgent action must be taken to increase people's incomes

Latest Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) survey of independent food banks finds:

- 94% of contributing organisations reported increased need for their services following the cut to Universal Credit in October 2021 while 92% of this group saw yet further increases since August 2022
- Over 90% of organisations reported both helping people who had not previously accessed support and more people needing regular food supplies
- 75% of contributing organisations had been impacted by supply issues with 1 in 5 needing to reduce the size of their food parcels
- 60% of organisations said that if demand continues to increase, they will need to reduce the size of their food parcels or will not be able to provide support

A new cohort of independent food banks operating across the UK have reported that the number of people needing support is continuing to grow as they struggle to cope with rising demand.

IFAN published similar warnings in [May](#), [August](#) and [October](#) based on data contributed by three different groups of independent food banks – half of the organisations contributing to IFAN's November survey did not take part in IFAN's October survey.

Again, many of the independent food banks responding to IFAN's survey warned that unless people's incomes are increased, they may not be able to help everyone seeking their help or that they would have to reduce the size of their food parcels as the winter sets in.

Independent food bank teams are continuing to struggle to source adequate food supply and have seen significant falls in food and financial donations. 75% of organisations contributing to this latest survey were struggling with supply issues and reported a drop in donations while 54% were having to use financial reserves.

Most contributing organisations reported supporting people who hadn't accessed their help before as well as people needing regular support. Food banks are seeing increasing numbers of people who are in work but cannot manage to get by. As reported previously, the most common reason for needing a food bank was the rise in the cost of living. Inadequate wages were reported as the second most common reason.

Independent food banks say that the Government must at the very least commit to uprating benefit payments in line with inflation in tomorrow's Autumn Statement and fast track this change to come into effect as soon as possible. It's also vital that targeted cash first support is urgently introduced to directly boost the lowest incomes through the winter. IFAN is also calling for rapid action to increase both benefit payments and wages in line with the rising cost of living alongside commitments on job security.

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

“Independent food bank teams are yet again warning the Government that staggering increases in need for their services is putting them under unsustainable and unconscionable pressure. As inflation figures climb steeply, their message is clear. People's incomes whether through benefit payments or wages must be increased so that we don't see the collapse of charitable food aid providers already at breaking point as well as food bank volunteers in the impossible position of having to turn people away.”

Charlotte White of IFAN member Earlsfield Foodbank said:

“Not just more new guests, but existing guests need our services more frequently - some who used to visit every other month or so now need support weekly. Often benefits are in order but are simply not enough for people to get through the month.”

Jane Wall of Stannington Foodbank said:

“We are seeing people who we haven't seen for at least 6 months returning for support as well as a big increase in new clients.”

Anne McCormack of IFAN member Broke not Broken said:

“At some point, we will be forced to stop. Funding will run out, energy will run out and demand will continue to climb. Volunteers have the will to support their communities but that may not be enough in the coming months.”

Background:

- The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) supports and advocates on behalf of charitable food aid providers operating across the UK including over 550 independent food banks. IFAN's vision is of a country without the need for charitable food aid where adequate and nutritious food is affordable to all. IFAN calls for a cash first approach to food insecurity - ifanuk.org/infographic.
- In April 2022, IFAN members wrote to the Prime Minister and the Chancellor expressing “their deep concern about the scale of suffering that we are already witnessing as well as our capacity to prevent people from going hungry in the weeks and months to come” – www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/letter-april22
- In October 2022, IFAN, the Trussell Trust and Feeding Britain wrote to the Prime Minister calling for the end for the need for their services saying “We are overstretched and exhausted. Many of our organisations are at breaking point.” - www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/blog/pmjoint-letter

- For November's survey, 73 organisations running 154 independent food banks in 70 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales contributed data to IFAN from the 4th to the 11th of November 2022. 36 of the 73 organisations also contributed data to IFAN's October survey. 30 of the 73 organisations also contributed to IFAN's August survey and 17 of the 73 organisations to both IFAN's August and October surveys. All of IFAN's surveys can be accessed at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/data
- In October 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from a different sample of 98 organisations running 188 independent food banks in 94 local authorities across England, Scotland, and Wales from the 30th of September to the 7th of October 2022.
- In August 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from another sample of 84 organisations running 169 independent food banks in 71 local authorities across England, Scotland, and Wales from the 15th to the 23rd of August 2022.
- In May 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from another sample again of 101 IFAN members organisations running 194 independent food banks in 94 local authorities across England, Scotland, and Wales from the 4th to 9th of May 2022.
- IFAN has identified at least 1,172 independent food banks operating across the UK including those run by multiple faith groups in addition to over 1,300 Trussell Trust food banks as well as hundreds of food banks run by schools, universities, hospitals and the Salvation Army. There are also thousands of other charitable food aid providers including food pantries, social supermarkets, and soup kitchens.
- The Trussell Trust published its mid-year statistics last week. Nearly 1.3 million emergency food parcels were distributed in the last six months with 320,000 people seeking help for the first time while 1 in 5 people referred to Trussell Trust food banks were from working households - www.trusselltrust.org
- In March 2022, IFAN published *Pushed to the Edge: Poverty, Food Banks and Mental Health* alongside mental health social worker Tom Pollard and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation - www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/blog/mental-health
- Food bank data represent the tip of the iceberg when it comes to wider food insecurity. Recent Food Standards Agency data show that 4% of people in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland used a food bank between April and June 2021 while 15% of people went hungry or reduced their food intake due to lack of income. www.food.gov.uk/research/food-and-you-2/food-and-you-2-wave-3
- The Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey (FRS) found that in the year before the onset of the pandemic, 43% of UK

households on Universal Credit were food insecure. Thanks to the £20 weekly increase to Universal Credit, there was a 16% reduction in severe and moderate food insecurity levels for those households relying on this benefit, but the uplift was removed in October 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2019-to-2020>

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IFAN's data can be accessed at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/data

IFAN's website: www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk

Breakdown of IFAN Survey – November 2022

Table 1 – Levels of need from October 2021 to July 2022 as reported by 73 organisations operating 154 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
Yes, we've seen a further increase	47
Yes, we've seen a significant, further increase	22
Stayed the same	3
Decrease in need	0
Other	1

Table 2 – Levels of need since August 2022 compared to the previous 10 months (October 2021 to July 2022) as reported by 69 organisations operating 150 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
Yes, we've seen a further increase	41
Yes, we've seen a significant increase	23
Stayed the same	5
Decrease in need	0

Table 3 – Reasons behind further increases in need from August to October 2022 (on top of increases from October 2021 to July 2022) as reported by 64 organisations operating 117 independent food banks. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Reasons for use	No of organisations
Increases in the cost of living	64
Inadequate wages	46
Universal Credit waiting times	34
Insecure work	32
Sanctions	31
The cut to Universal Credit	29
Housing problems	25
Benefit deductions	23
Rent increases	21
Disability related costs	21
No Recourse to Public Funds	19
Evictions	15
Disability benefits	14
Benefit cap	11
Two-child limit	9
Other	5

Table 4 – Support for people who have not previously needed help from August to October 2022 as reported by 73 organisations operating 154 independent food banks.

Supporting people who have not needed help before	No of organisations
Yes	67
No	6

Table 5 – Increase in number of people needing regular support from August to October 2022 compared to the same period in 2021 as reported by 73 organisations operating 154 independent food banks.

Seeing more people needing regular support	No of organisations
Yes	66
No	4
Other	3

Table 6 – Supply issue impact since August 2022 as reported by 73 organisations operating 154 independent food banks.

Impacted by supply issues	No of organisations
Yes - needed to reduce size of food parcel	16
Yes - but able operate as usual	39
No	18

Table 7 – Underlying causes for supply issues as reported by 55 organisations operating 135 independent food banks. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Resources issue	No of organisations
Food donation levels dropped	40
Surplus food supply dropped	35
Having to dip into financial reserves	31
Quality of surplus food has been impacted	22
Stock levels have reduced significantly	21

Financial donation levels dropped	20
Unable to buy in bulk	15
Unable to purchase stock due to lack of funding	11
Other	3

Table 8 – Concern about capacity to provide support if need continues to increase as reported by 73 organisations operating 154 independent food banks.

Level of concern about capacity to provide support	No of organisation
Yes - may need to reduce parcel size/voucher support	20
Yes - may not be able to support everyone seeking our help	24
No - confident about being able to access supply to meet demand	29