



The Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London
SW1A 2AA

8th of April 2022

Dear Prime Minister and Chancellor of the Exchequer

The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) represents food aid providers operating across the UK including over 550 independent food banks. We are writing to urge you to take immediate action to reduce the rapidly rising levels of poverty, destitution, and hunger in our communities.

We are deeply concerned 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. An emergency supply of food cannot resolve someone's financial crisis and will only act as a temporary sticking plaster. Measures must be urgently introduced to decisively increase people's incomes through the social security system, emergency cash first support and wage increases combined with job security.

The reasons behind rising food bank use during the decade before the pandemic started are well-documented - these include lengthy Universal Credit waiting times, social security payment levels being insufficient to meet living costs, the benefit cap, the two-child limit, sanctions, inadequate wages, and No Recourse to Public Funds status. Since October 2021, the cut to Universal Credit, the end of the furlough scheme, as well as the start of the cost-of-living crisis have led to unrelenting increases in demand for emergency food support.

By now, people are faced with yet more pressures and impossible choices as energy prices spiral out of control alongside hikes in the price of food and other essentials. People relying on social security payments are seeing a real-terms cut to their income due to inflation rising well above benefit levels. Over 200,000 disabled households are due to see their Warm Home Discount removed. Furthermore, the increase to National Insurance contributions will impact many low-income households.

Food bank and wider food insecurity data had already reached record levels before the huge increases we saw in 2020. The Department for Work and Pensions' Family Resources Survey (FRS) found that in the year before the onset of Covid-19, 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 as demonstrated by FRS data released last week. Yet, the £20 uplift was removed in October 2021. Recent Food Standards Agency data show that 4% of people in England, Wales, and Northern Ireland used a food bank in the 12 months up to June 2021 while 15% of people went hungry or reduced their food intake due to lack of income.

The devastating long-term impact of poverty and food insecurity is well-documented. Cutting back our threadbare social security system further and allowing low wages and insecure work to become the norm will inevitably lead to increasing health inequalities at huge cost to our society. The impact of poverty and food insecurity on people's physical and mental health entails enormous human cost, strains public finances through the NHS and other support, and further institutionalises an unsustainable charitable food aid system.

£500 million added to the Household Support Fund (HSF) cannot possibly begin to fill the gap left by an inadequate social security safety net. This funding is a drop in the ocean in terms of the scale of need we are seeing. What's more, the HSF is discretionary and not necessarily distributed as cash first support meaning people must often use vouchers or even food banks to access any help at all. It's essential that measures are urgently introduced that will ensure cash first, income-based solutions to growing poverty and food insecurity:

- benefits must be updated by at least 8% in line with inflation
- the 5-week wait for Universal Credit, benefit cap, two-child limit, sanctions system, and No Recourse to Public Funds status must be removed
- wages should match the cost of living and job security must be ensured
- crisis payments in the form of cash must be available, easily accessible, and well-promoted in every local authority in the UK

It is the Government's responsibility to ensure that everybody in our society can afford food and other essentials. It is not for volunteers to plug the gaps left by a broken social security system and poorly paid jobs. Over the past 12 years, our members have worked tirelessly in often extremely challenging circumstances to support hundreds of thousands of people in communities across the UK. However, there is a limit to food banks' capacity to support the numbers of people seeking their help. Food bank teams are often over-stretched and exhausted and could well be unable to continue to pick up the pieces. Volunteers cannot be expected to cope both physically and mentally with such relentless demand. What's more, people who used to donate to food banks are now needing to access help themselves. Our members are struggling to find the resources to provide adequate food parcels as the scale of demand and food and energy price increases impact on the services they run.

Charitable food aid has been an inadequate and unsustainable stop gap measure to growing poverty in the UK for 12 years. We urge you to immediately address the root causes of the poverty driving the need for our services. Food banks are reaching breaking point. We very much look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,



Sabine Goodwin on behalf of the Independent Food Aid Network including the member organisations listed below:

Trinity Foodbank Radcliffe, Bury
Micah Liverpool, Liverpool
The King's Storehouse, Denbighshire
West Dunbartonshire Community Foodshare, West Dunbartonshire
Machars Churches Basics Food Bank, Dumfries and Galloway
Pembrokeshire Action To Combat Hardship, Pembrokeshire
Craven Vale Food Bank, Brighton and Hove
Lambeth Larder Community Food Resource CIC, Lambeth
Action For Refugees In Lewisham (AFRIL), Lewisham
Dads' House, Kensington and Chelsea
Community Essentials CIC, Solihull
Croftfoot Church Pantry, Glasgow
Southampton City Mission, Southampton
Jedburgh Foodbank, Scottish Borders
Dartmoor Community Kitchen, Teinbridge
Hambleton Foodshare, Hambleton
Moray Food Plus, Moray
Independence Initiative Limited, Sefton
The River Manchester, Manchester City
Friends of the Homeless in Fareham and Gosport, Fareham and Gosport
Kingsbridge Food Bank, South Hams
Food in Community, South Hams
Earlsfield Foodbank, Wandsworth
Pontardawe PANTRY Foodbank, Neath Port Talbot
North Paddington Food Bank, Westminster
Lammermuir Larder, East Lothian
The Glory of Shaddai, Southwark
Legendary Community Club, Lewisham
Burton HOPE, East Staffordshire
Kintyre Food Bank, Argyll and Bute
Sufra NW London, Brent
Northampton Hope Centre, West Northamptonshire
Central and West Integration Network, Glasgow
Stow Park Community Centre, Newport
The Worthing Food Foundation, Adur and Worthing
Braes Storehouse Food Bank, Falkirk
Rumi's Cave, Brent
Albrighton Food Bank, Shropshire
Heart of Braehead, Stirling
N&B Healthy Living Network, Nuneaton and Bedworth
Eggcup, Lancaster
Feeding Gainsborough, West Lindsey
Instant Neighbour, Aberdeen
STEP (South Tyrone Empowerment Programme), Mid Ulster
South Norwood Community Kitchen, Croydon
Govan Community Project, Glasgow
Spring Community Hub, Southwark
Lampeter Food Bank, Ceredigion
St Paul's Centre, Cheshire East
Olive Branch Aid, Wandsworth

Ventnor Community Foodbank, Isle of Wight
The Hereford Food Bank, Herefordshire
PBP Foodbank (CETMA), Camarthenshire
Daventry Food Bank, West Northamptonshire
Independence Initiative Limited, Sefton
Leominster Food Bank, Herefordshire
Fair Frome, Mendip
Kate's Kitchen, East Ayrshire
Asylum Link Merseyside, Liverpool
Kirkcaldy Foodbank, Fife
Carpenters Café, Newham
Darkwood Crew - Helping Ferguslie Flourish, Renfrewshire
Ashton Pantry, Wigan
EATS Rosyth, Fife
The Pantry at Tintagel Social Hall, Cornwall
Newmarket Open Door, West Suffolk
Carlisle Foodbank, Carlisle
Lifeshare, Manchester City
Granville Community Kitchen, Brent
Preen Community Interest Company, Central Bedfordshire
One Can Trust Food Bank, Buckinghamshire
The Welcome Centre, Huddersfield
Nailsea Community Group, North Somerset
The Life House, Birmingham City
Readifood, Reading
Bishops Stortford Food Bank
Living Well Bromley, Bromley
The Storehouse Foodbank Congleton, Cheshire East
Sandbach Food Bank, Cheshire East
Broke Not Broken, Perth and Kinross
We Care Community Hub, Lewisham
Come Out Of Hiding The Lighthouse Network CIC, Lewisham
Selby Food Hub, Haringey
Washington Community Food Project, Sunderland
Pontarddulais Area Food Bank, Swansea
The Vineyard Care Centre @The Vineyard Church, St Albans
Black Country Foodbank, Dudley, Walsall, Sandwell
Diamond Hampers CIC, Huntingdonshire
Hemsworth Food Pantry - Food Bank, Wakefield
The Zink Project, High Peak
CMFFA Foodbank, Milton Keynes
Craft In Mind CIC, Warrington
The SPACE - Supporting People And Community Empowerment, Kensington and Chelsea
Touch of Love Outreach, Aberdeen
NewStarts, Bromsgrove
Rhayader and District Community Support, Powys
Hope Church Hounslow Foodbank, Hounslow
The Gate Charity, Clackmannanshire
St Aidan's FoodShare

Axminster Food Bank, East Devon
Eymouth and East Berwickshire Foodbank, Scottish Borders
Jubilee Storehouse, Ceredigion
Lancashire First, Burnley
Canaan Trust, Erewash
St Laurences Larder and Open Kitchen, Brent
Dunbar FoodShare, East Lothian
Wyre Forest Food Bank, Wyre Forest
The People's Pantry, Glasgow
Storehouse Foodbank, Babergh
Sharing Life Trust, Buckinghamshire
Clydesdale Food Bank, South Lanarkshire
Blackpool Food Bank, Blackpool
Restore Northampton, West Northamptonshire
Shoreline Church Food Bank, Sefton
Wycombe Food Hub, Buckinghamshire
Hope for Belper, Amber Valley
Harvesters Soup Kitchen, Hackney
Brackley Foodbank, West Northamptonshire
The Raft Foundation, Rossendale
Sutton Coldfield Baptist Church Foodbank, Birmingham
Central and West Integration Network, Glasgow
Ystradgynlais Foodbank, Powys
Telford Crisis Support, Telford and Wrekin
Wells Vineyard Church Foodbank, Mendip
Maidenhead FoodShare, Windsor and Maidenhead
Liberty Food Bank, Croydon
Bute Oasis Food Bank, Argyll and Bute
Holbeach Community Larder, South Holland
Duns Food Bank, Scottish Borders
Hive Hope Food Bank, Gravesham
Pan Together, Isle of Wight
Pantry Foodbank, Neath Port Talbot
Noah's Ark, Tonbridge and Malling