



IFAN SURVEY OCTOBER 2022 1900 12.10.22.

Struggling to cope with the number of people seeking their support, independent food banks say the Government must act immediately to uprate benefit payments in line with inflation

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

- On top of increases since the cut to Universal Credit in October 2021, **91% of organisations saw demand rise yet further since July 2022**
- **82% of organisations** reported being impacted by supply issues since July 2022 with **nearly 1 in 4** needing to reduce the size of their food parcels
- **85% of organisations** reported needing to provide regular support to people struggling to afford food from July to September 2022
- **As the winter sets in, half of the organisations** contributing to the survey say they may not be able to support everyone who needs their help or may have to reduce the size of their food parcels to meet increasing demand

Independent food banks across the UK have reported that the number of people they're supporting continues to grow and that they are deeply concerned that they will not be able to meet escalating demand through the winter months. IFAN published [similar warnings in August](#) and [in May](#) based on data contributed by two different groups of food banks.

Unless drastic action is taken to increase people's incomes, half of the independent food banks responding to this survey warned that they may not be able to help everyone who needed their help or that they would have to reduce the size of their food parcels.

Independent food bank teams are continuing to struggle to source adequate food supply and have seen significant falls in food and financial donations. 64% of organisations struggling with supply issues reported a drop in food donations while more than half were having to dip into financial reserves. More than half of these organisations said surplus food supply had reduced and nearly half reported the quality of these stocks had deteriorated.

Independent food banks are also warning of depleted teams as the cost-of-living crisis means volunteers need to take on work or can no longer run their cars for food deliveries. Food bank teams are exhausted and are wondering how they are going to cope this winter.

The results of IFAN's survey show the increasing number of people who are needing regular food parcels as well as the scale of support being given to people who've never needed to access a food bank before. The most common reason for needing a food bank was reported as the rise in the cost-of-living followed by inadequate wages.

Independent food banks say that the Government must urgently uprate benefit payments in line with inflation and fast track this change to come into effect as soon as possible. IFAN is urging the Government to put measures in place to ensure benefit payments and wages match the rising cost of living so the need for charitable food aid can be eliminated.

Kathy Bland, Leominster Food Bank:

“Meeting the needs of the growing number of people asking for our support has become increasingly stressful for our team of volunteers and is not sustainable. At least in the height of the pandemic we knew there would eventually be an end to it.”

Chelly Sturgess, The Pantry at Tintagel Social Hall:

“We haven't gotten into full on winter yet, but we anticipate it being a rough time. We would like our government to do better for people. They have the means to address this.”

Simon Lellow, Telford Crisis Support:

“The narrative needs to change from the cost-of-living crisis to the cost of subsisting crisis. Many of our clients have been struggling with a cost-of-living crisis for years.”

Sue Wood, Hope Church Hounslow:

“As we go into the winter, we are anticipating that our numbers will increase significantly and that we won't be able to sustain the level of help we can now offer.”

Paul O'Brien, Micah Liverpool:

“The pressure on food aid projects is being increased as those who are living on the bread line are being forced into destitution. Alongside this, the cost-of-living crisis has meant that those who support us have had to reduce the amount they can give. We now have more mouths to feed with fewer resources than we have ever had.”

Betty Grant, The Community Foodbank, Skye and Lochalsh:

“The situation must improve significantly, and incomes increased. Our services are really not sustainable.”

Catherine Evans, Pontarddulais Area Food Bank:

“We are very concerned about how the most vulnerable in our community will manage to support themselves through the winter months.”

Charlotte White, Earlsfield Foodbank:

“Every week the numbers go up, the queue starts earlier in the morning and the phone never stops ringing with new referrals. And it's getting harder to service the rising number of guests. Donations are down. We must work so much harder to get the level needed now for our weekly numbers. It's also difficult and increasingly more time-consuming to help with the growing number of problems and complex issues that people are facing.”

Alexandra McMillan, Legendary Community Club, Lewisham

“We are fearful of how we will cope and be able to provide support. Some of us will need to stop volunteering as we struggle to cope mentally with what we're seeing and to afford to travel to volunteer and make ends meet ourselves.”

Annie McCormack, Broke not Broken, Perth and Kinross:

“Not only are we worried about our clients, but also for our own volunteers and staff. They are witness to so much trauma and desperation and are feeling the impact of their critical work. I am concerned that the third sector as a whole, who have filled all these gaps for so long, is starting to crumble under the strain.””

Tom Pollard, Mental Health Social Worker and Author of “Pushed to the Edge. Poverty, Food Banks and Mental Health”:

"The circumstances that lead people to need support from food banks often have a devastating impact on their mental health. Struggling to make ends meet while enduring hunger, cold and poor living conditions inevitably causes huge amounts of stress and anxiety that can make people unwell or exacerbate existing mental health problems. While food banks can provide a vital lifeline to many people, they are no substitute for having an adequate income to live with independence, security and dignity."

Sabine Goodwin, Coordinator of the Independent Food Aid Network:

"The Government is clearly being warned of impending catastrophe. We urge the Government to act now, before yet more people are forced into destitution and food aid charities are put into the impossible position of having to turn people away. Food banks were never the solution to the UK's poverty crisis, but as the situation worsens, this has never been more obvious. At the very least, benefit payments must urgently be updated in line with inflation."

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
- For October's survey, 98 organisations running 188 independent food banks in 94 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales contributed data to IFAN from the 30th of September to the 7th of October 2022. 39 of the 98 organisations also contributed data to IFAN's August survey.
- In August 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from a different sample of 84 organisations running 169 independent food banks in 71 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales from 15th to the 23rd of August 2022.
- In May 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from another sample of 101 IFAN members organisations running 194 independent food banks in 94 local authorities.
- IFAN has identified at least 1,172 independent food banks operating across the UK in addition to over 1,300 Trussell Trust food banks and hundreds of food banks run by schools, universities, hospitals as well as the Salvation Army. There are also thousands of other charitable food aid providers including food pantries, social supermarkets, and soup kitchens.
- 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. <https://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>

- Find out more at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk

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Breakdown of IFAN Survey – October 2022

Table 1 - Levels of need from October 2021 to June 2022 as reported by 98 organisations operating 188 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
Yes, we've seen a further increase	54
Yes, we've seen a significant, further increase	26
Stayed the same	12
Decrease in need	1
Other	5

Table 2 - Levels of need since July 2022 compared to the previous 9 months (October 2021 to June 2022) as reported by 80 organisations operating 163 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
Yes, we've seen a further increase	48
Yes, we've seen a significant increase	25
Stayed the same	3
Decrease in need	3
Other	1

Table 3 – Reasons behind further increases in need from July to September 2022 (on top of increases from October 2021 to June 2022) as reported by 73 organisations operating 127 independent food banks. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Reasons for use	No of organisations
Increases in the cost of living	69
Inadequate wages	49
Zero-hour contracts/Insecure work	36
Cut to Universal Credit	34
Housing problems	31
Benefit deductions	27
Sanctions	27
No Recourse to Public Funds	17
Benefit Cap	13
Two-child limit	11
Not sure	4

Table 4 - Approximate percentages of people supported July to September 2022 who have not needed to access support before as reported by 98 organisations operating 188 independent food banks.

% people supported	No of organisations
Up to 25%	36
From 25% to 50%	27
Around 50%	14
From 50% to 75%	7
Around 75%	1
More than 75%	1
Other	12

Table 5 - Increased number of people needing regular support from July to September 2022 compared to the same period in 2021 as reported by 98 organisations operating 188 independent food banks.

Seeing more people needing regular support	No or organisations
Yes	84
No	7
Other	7

Table 6 - Organisations impacted by supply issues July to September 2022 as reported by 98 organisations operating 188 independent food banks.

Impacted by supply issues	No of organisations
Yes - needed to reduce size of food parcel	24
Yes - but able operate as usual	57
No	17

Table 7 - The underlying causes for supply issues as reported by 81 organisations operating 166 independent food banks. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Resources issue	No of organisations
Food donation levels dropped	52
Surplus food supply dropped	49
Having to dip into financial reserves	46
Stock levels have significantly reduced	38
Quality of surplus food has been impacted	33
Unable to buy in bulk	33
Financial donation levels dropped	22
Unable to purchase stock due to lack of funding	18
Other	7

Table 8 - Concerns about capacity to provide support if need continues to increase as reported by 98 organisations operating 188 independent food banks.

Level of concern about capacity to provide support	No of organisation
Yes - may need to reduce parcel size/voucher support	22
Yes - may not be able to support everyone seeking our help	31
No - confident about being able to access supply	45

