



LATEST INDEPENDENT FOOD AID NETWORK (IFAN) DATA DECEMBER 2022

Independent food bank teams say urgent action must be taken in January to increase people's incomes as debts mount up and poverty spirals out of control

Latest IFAN survey of member independent food banks operating in 69 local authorities finds:

- **Over 91% of contributing IFAN member organisations reported increased need for their services comparing November 2021 with November 2022**
- **90% of groups reported helping both people who had not previously accessed support as well as people needing regular food aid**
- **From September to November 2022, over two thirds of organisations had experienced supply issues**
- **46% of organisations were concerned about their capacity to support people if demand stayed the same or continued to increase**

A new group of independent food banks operating across the UK have reported that the number of people needing support has continued to increase as their capacity is over-stretched.

IFAN published similar warnings in May, August, October, and November of this year based on data contributed by four different groups of independent food banks.¹ Independent food banks have consistently reported that cost of living rises and inadequate wages have been driving increasing need for their services. November's cost-of-living payments reduced some pressure temporarily but provided little respite as people's incomes fail to stretch far enough.

IFAN warns that unless people's incomes are urgently increased, their frontline member organisations may not be able to help everyone seeking their help and may have to reduce the size of their food parcels. Volunteers are exhausted and "scared" of what the new year will bring as more and more people seek their support. 69% of organisations contributing to this latest survey had struggled with supply issues and had seen falls in food and financial donations.

IFAN is calling for targeted cash first support to be urgently introduced to directly boost the lowest incomes in January 2023. The network is also calling for long-term action to increase both benefit payments and wages in line with the rising cost of living alongside commitments on job security.

¹ www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/data

Kathy Bland of the Leominster Food Bank in Herefordshire said:

“In 2022 Leominster Food Bank has given out more than double the number of food parcels distributed in 2021 and December has seen the tsunami of need that we predicted was on its way. People are cold, hungry, and desperate. Age UK is referring far more elderly people for help than ever before. Our volunteers cannot keep up with this level of service and I don't believe we've seen the worst of this crisis yet. They are exhausted and scared about how we can carry on if numbers continue to rise. The scale of need is not something food banks should feel responsible for. Incomes need to increase so that people can afford the basics in life.”

Jen Coleman of the Black Country Foodbank in Dudley said:

“We all feel very concerned about January 2023, historically a difficult month anyway, because of the financial challenges this December has seen. So many people are facing debt and increased energy bills while buying food is not an option. And our figures are just the tip of the iceberg because so many people won't use food charities and will suffer silently.”

Alison Grainger of Hambleton Foodshare in Northallerton said:

"We have been spending unprecedented levels of funding on supply in order to keep up with demand. Generous food donations have been coming but they're not necessarily what's needed. We are extremely concerned about the numbers of people seeking our help for the first time and know from experience that this doesn't bode well for the new year."

Kate Brewster of One Can Trust in Buckinghamshire said:

"We're expecting the extremely high demand we've seen in 2022 to continue through 2023. January is likely to be difficult - some families will have been even more squeezed in the second half of December, struggling to feed their children over the holidays. At the same time, with the continuing impact of the cost of living, it's likely we'll see a decline in support."

Hilary Tudor of New Forest Basics Bank in New Forest District said:

“The demand for our services is now running consistently at the high level we had during our peaks in the COVID crisis. This means we are working flat out every month to support everyone who need it and are running at almost full capacity. Our fear is that the situation is going to deteriorate for more households as the rising cost of living depletes any savings people have and so increasing client numbers and reducing donations.”

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

“Independent food banks have seen very welcome generosity across communities this Christmas. However, seasonal donations and the distribution of emergency food parcels can't solve this crisis, only raising incomes can. We cannot continue to normalise a crisis, volunteer-led response to entrenched and rapidly worsening poverty in our society.

However welcome the 10.1% increase in benefits will be in April, it is likely to barely scratch the surface when it comes to reducing food insecurity and the clearly unsustainable pressure on

charitable food aid providers. Although temporary, November's Cost of Living payments demonstrated that cash first support can reduce the need for food banks.

Our Government must take responsibility for the policies driving Britain's poverty epidemic and urgently reduce the impact it will have on the health and wealth of millions of people."

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 December's survey, 67 organisations running 139 independent food banks in 69 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales contributed data to IFAN. 56 contributed figures from the 6th to the 13th of December 2022 while an additional 11 organisations contributed additional responses between the 13th and 15th of December.
- 61% of the IFAN member organisations contributing to IFAN's December survey did not take part in IFAN's November survey. 26 of the 67 organisations also contributed data to IFAN's November survey. 29 of the 67 organisations also contributed data to IFAN's October survey. And 30 of the 67 organisations contributed data to IFAN's August survey. 10 of the 67 organisations contributed data to all four of IFAN's Autumn 2022 surveys. All of IFAN's recent surveys can be accessed at www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/data.
- In November 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from a different sample of 73 organisations running 154 independent food banks in 70 local authorities across England, Scotland and Wales from the 4th to the 11th of November 2022.
- In October 2022, IFAN published [data](#) collated from a further 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 a different 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 - December 2022

Table 1 - Levels of need in November 2022 compared to November 2021 as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
Yes, we've seen an increase	35
Yes, we've seen a significant increase	26
Stayed the same	4
Decrease in need	2

Table 2 - Reasons behind increases in need from September to November 2022 as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 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	52
Insecure work	39
Benefit deductions	39
Sanctions	38
Universal Credit waiting times	37
Housing problems	25
The cut to Universal Credit	24

Rent increases	23
No Recourse to Public Funds	22
Disability benefits	16
Disability related costs	14
Evictions	13
Benefit cap	13
Two-child limit	12
Other	8
Not sure	2

Table 3 - Seeing people who have not needed support before accessing services from September to November 2022 as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Seeing people who have not needed help before	No of organisations
Yes	61
No	6

Table 4 - Increased number of people needing regular support from September to November 2022 compared to the same period in 2021 as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Seeing more people needing regular support	No or organisations

Yes	60
No	5
Other	2

Table 5 - Levels of need reduced temporarily apparently after the November Cost of Living Payment as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Seeing fewer people needing support	No of organisations
Yes	21
No	40
Other	6

Table 6 - Organisations impacted by supply issues from September to November 2022 as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Impacted by supply issues	No of organisations
Yes - needed to reduce size of food parcel	6
Yes - but able operate as usual	40
No	21

Table 7 - The underlying causes for supply issues as reported by 46 organisations operating 84 independent food banks in relation to September to November 2022. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Resources issue	No of organisations
Food donation levels dropped	32

Surplus food supply dropped	30
Having to dip into financial reserves	24
Quality of surplus food has been impacted	17
Stock levels have reduced significantly	15
Unable to buy in bulk	14
Financial donation levels dropped	10
Other	7
Unable to purchase stock due to lack of funding	6

Table 8 - Concerns about capacity to provide support if need continues to increase as reported by 67 organisations operating 139 independent food banks.

Level of concern about capacity to provide support	No of organisation
Yes – anticipate needing to reduce parcel size/no of vouchers provided	13
Yes - may not be able to support everyone seeking our help	18
No - confident about being able to access supply to meet demand	36