

# Cash first and disentangling the food waste and food poverty problems

- The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) represents hundreds of independent food aid providers operating across the UK, including over 100 independent food banks in 25 local authorities across Scotland
- Our vision is of a country without the need for charitable food aid where adequate and nutritious food is affordable to all



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 Wednesday 31 August 2022  
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**The Guardian**  
 News provider of the year

# Hunger fears as food banks warn stock may run out

Josh Halliday  
 North of England correspondent

Food banks around Britain have warned of a "completely unsustainable" surge in demand that will prevent them feeding the hungriest families this winter.

Organisations representing 169 food banks have told the Guardian that the number of people seeking emergency help had already grown "dramatically" and predicted "bleak and disturbing" weeks ahead.

Of the 169 providers, nearly 70% said they might need to turn people away or shrink the size of emergency rations this winter. Almost three-quarters said that food donation levels had dropped since April, despite the soaring demand.

The warning came amid alarming forecasts about surging inflation, with pressure growing on Liz Truss, Boris Johnson's likely successor as prime minister, to give some indication of how she intends to deal with the cost of living emergency.

Figures published today show shop prices rose by a record 5.1% in August as the war in Ukraine raised costs for farmers.

Fresh food prices also rose by 10.5%, according to data from the

**'This is completely unsustainable - and we have begun to take steps to limit the support that we can provide'**

Kirkcaldy Foodbank  
 © Fife

British Retail Consortium (BRC) and market research firm NielsenIQ. That's the highest rate since September 2008, the time of the credit crunch when the global financial system was on the brink of collapse.

The US investment bank Goldman Sachs also warned yesterday that inflation in the UK could exceed 22% next year, close to the post-war record set in 1975, if wholesale energy prices remained at current high levels, heaping more pressure on households and businesses.

In one glimmer of hope, UK gas prices dropped by more than 20% yesterday amid reports that efforts to fill European gas storage before the winter appear to be ahead of schedule.

However, while prices eased from near record highs, they are still 12 times higher than before the energy crisis began, and neither Truss nor her leadership rival, Rishi Sunak, have set out how they intend to mitigate the crisis for millions of people this autumn and winter.

The shadow work and pensions secretary, Jonathan Ashworth, said: "When even food banks are warning they may need to shut up shop this winter because they can't meet the demand, we know the country is heading for a catastrophe without action."

"Families and pensioners are beyond desperate for real help now. Labour would freeze energy bills but instead we have Boris Johnson on a vanity tour, the chancellor on a New York jolly, and Liz Truss hiding from scrutiny because she has no answers to this crisis whatsoever."

In the survey by the Independent Food Aid Network UK (Ifan UK), nearly 90% of the organisations representing 169 food banks said demand had risen since April and 87% said they had



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# Food banks warn they are struggling to keep up with demand

By Dan Whitworth and Rob England  
 Radio 4 Money Box and the BBC Data Journalism team

22 July



INDEPENDENT PREMIUM

# 'Overwhelmed' food banks forced to turn people away after running out of food

Exclusive: Demand for help now fast outstripping supply, say charities hit by empty shelves

Business > Consumer > Cost of living

# 'I don't see how this model of food aid can continue' - Food banks forced to cut services as rising demand meets falling donations

# Food banks warn surge in demand will prevent feeding hungriest this winter

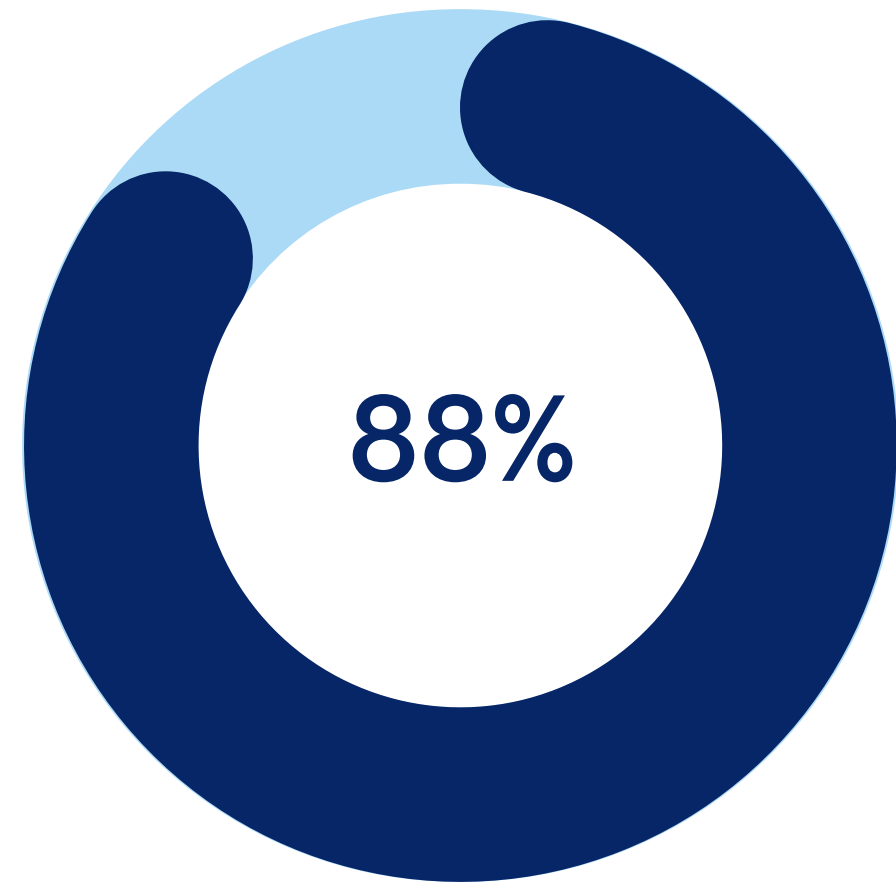
Exclusive: Nearly 70% of providers say they may need to turn people away or shrink the size of emergency rations



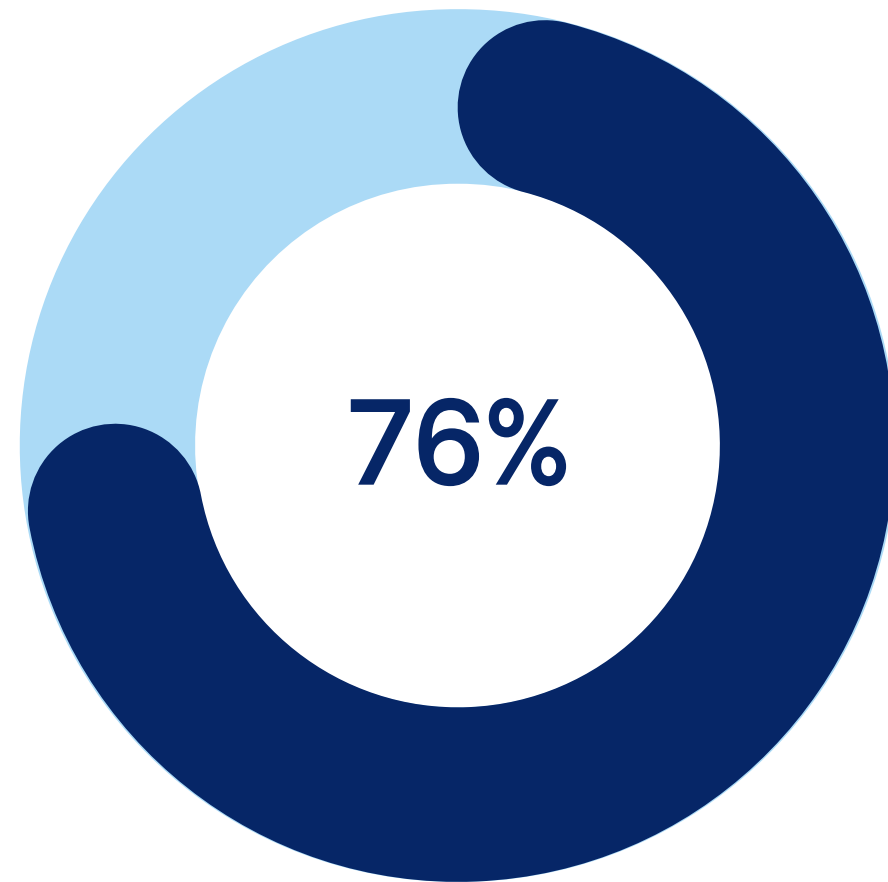
ed since April. Photograph



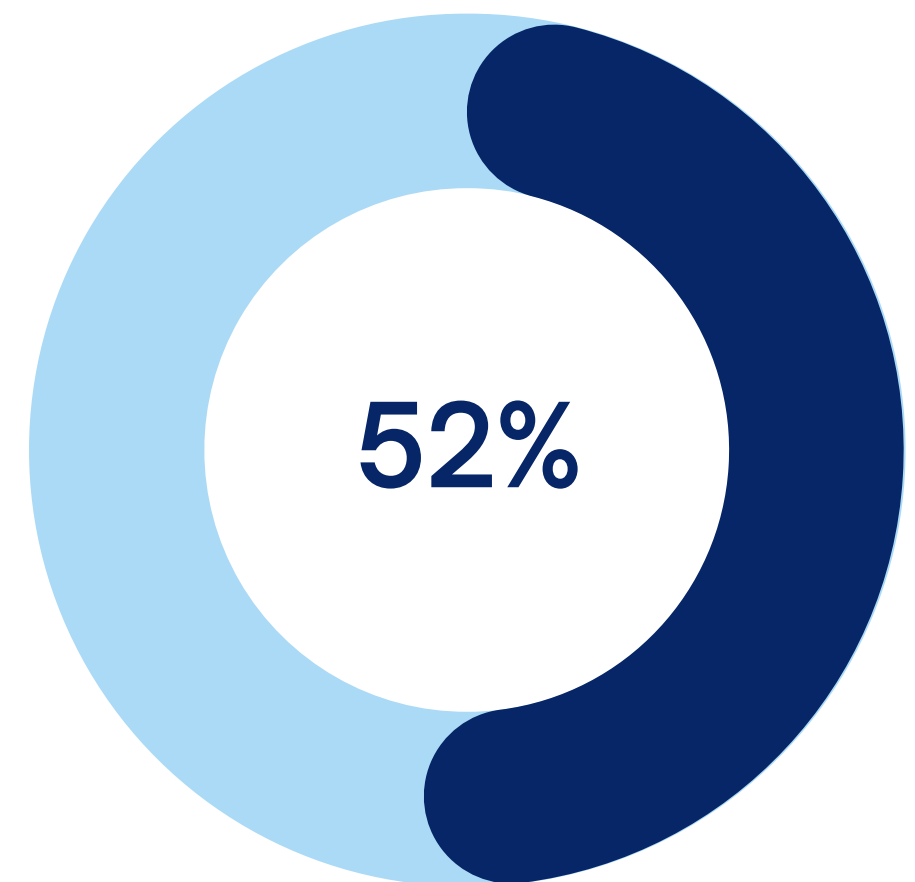
# Survey of independent food bank capacity (Scotland Data, February 2023)



Saw demand increase comparing Dec-21/Jan-22 with Dec-22/Jan-23



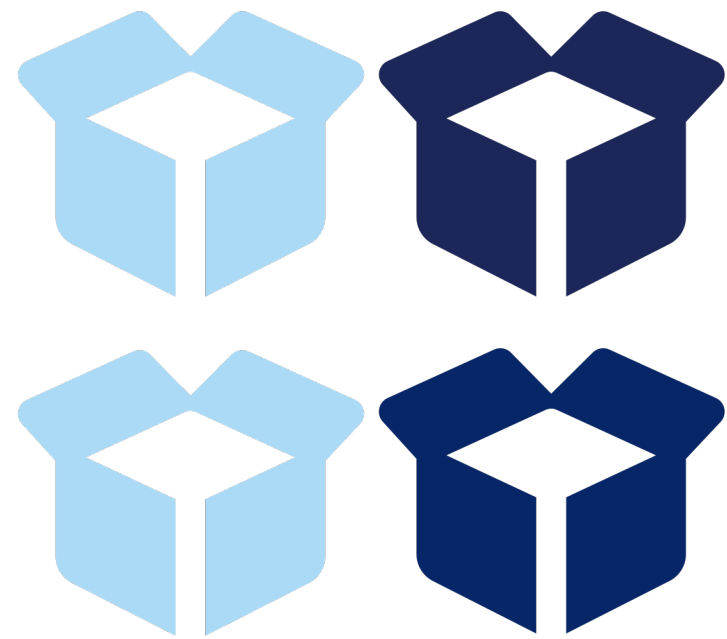
76% reported significant number of people needing help for the first time



Over half said food or financial donations had decreased

As reported by 17 organisations operating 30 independent food banks. (Scotland breakdown). For February's UK survey, 85 organisations running 154 independent food banks in 81 local authorities in England, Scotland and Wales contributed data to IFAN from the 10th to the 16th of February 2023.

# Survey of independent food bank capacity (UK Data, February 2023)



## Half of organisations

Said if demand increased, they would have to reduce the level of support or turn people away

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.”

**Annie McCormack, Broke not Broken, Perth and Kinross in 2022**



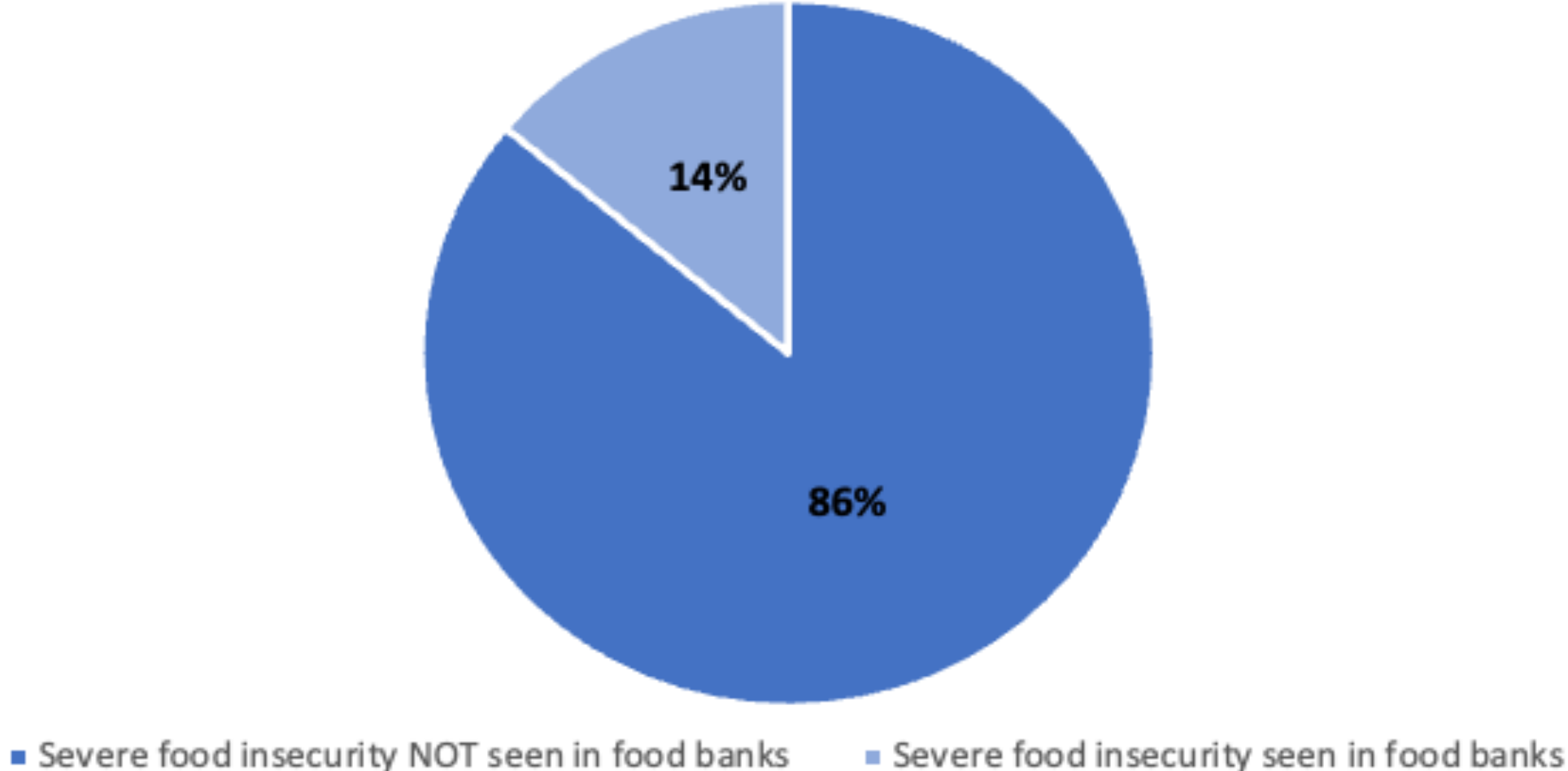
# Food insecurity beyond the use of food banks

DWP Family Resources Survey April 21-March 22 (Published March 2023)

3% of UK households reported very low food insecurity in the previous 30 days

(A further 3% of UK households reported low food insecurity in the previous 30 days)

Most households experiencing very low food insecurity do not use food banks







# #PlentyToShare

- Campaign run by This is Rubbish
- 'Designing food waste out of the system' = not using food waste to plug gaps of failing social security system & inadequate wages

## **This Is Rubbish are calling for the UK and governments around the world to:**

1. Introduce legally binding targets to reduce UK food waste by 50% from farm to fork by 2030, against 2015 baselines.
2. Introduce mandatory food waste measurement and reporting, for all businesses above a certain size.
3. Introduce mandatory participation in food waste reduction efforts, for all businesses above a certain size.
4. Increase taxes on landfill and introduce taxes on incineration, to reduce food waste going to these destinations.
5. Increase funding for food waste prevention and measurement, including of primary production food waste.

Find out more: [www.thisisrubbish.org.uk/plentytoshare](http://www.thisisrubbish.org.uk/plentytoshare)



# FOOD WASTE **CAN'T SOLVE** FOOD POVERTY.

SURPLUS FOOD REDISTRIBUTION FURTHER ENTRENCHES FOOD BANKS AS A RESPONSE TO FOOD POVERTY

- X **It's not acceptable** that people are not able to afford or choose the food they eat
- X **It's not acceptable** that we leave it up to volunteers to plug the gaps left by our broken social security safety net and inadequate wages
- X **It's not acceptable** to unnecessarily transport surplus food from a wasteful system when food should be affordable for all



# NEITHER SHOULD EXIST IN THE FIRST PLACE.

INSTEAD, WE NEED TO REVERSE THE NORMALISATION OF FOOD BANKS AND WORK TOWARDS A SOCIETY WHERE:



*Cash, not food, for people in crisis*

**Everyone can afford and choose food that's right for them and their families with dignity**

*Urge the Government to ensure a living income for all*

**The root causes of food poverty are addressed through adequate and accessible social security payments and wages that match the cost of living**

*No 'left over food' for 'left behind' people*

**We only produce the food we need and reduce food waste and the environmental impact of transporting and repackaging it**

#CashFirst #PlentyToShare



# As poverty levels increase, #CashFirst is common sense.

**When it comes to getting food,** most of us will choose and buy what we need.



**If we can't afford to buy food,** we're faced with a far more difficult journey.



**First, many of us will put off trying to seek help**

Stigma can mean people have not eaten for some time before they eventually find help.

**and then there's the journey to the food bank**

People may need to walk long distances or spend money to get to a food bank (if they don't deliver). Food banks are only open at specific times.

**to repeat the cycle again**

If household income is not increased, the cycle is likely to repeat. Sometimes there is also a limit on the number of food bank visits allowed.



**you may need to get a referral from a local agency**

Many food banks work on a referral only basis and it can be hard to get appointments.

**to receive a parcel of food chosen by someone else**

Many food banks work hard to offer choices, but this depends on what food is available.

**For food bank teams,** sourcing food is complex and challenging.

**This parcel is made up of donated and surplus food**

Food supply can be inconsistent and is dependent on donations and availability. Many food banks will also purchase food.

**transported by volunteers**

Food is often picked up by volunteers in their own vehicles. Surplus food may not be usable meaning food banks teams then have to dispose this waste.

**sorted and packed in the food bank**

Donated food is collected, checked for safety and quality, sorted, stored, packed and sometimes transported again before distribution.

**to repeat the cycle again**

Collectively, food bank teams are distributing food on an industrial scale. Unless lack of income is addressed, the cycle will repeat.



## Food parcels can't solve poverty, but raising incomes can.

A #CashFirst approach would mean everyone could afford and choose their own food with dignity.





# Scottish Government's plan to end the need for food banks (to be published shortly)

IFAN's response to the Scottish Government's consultation on its draft plan to end the need for food banks:

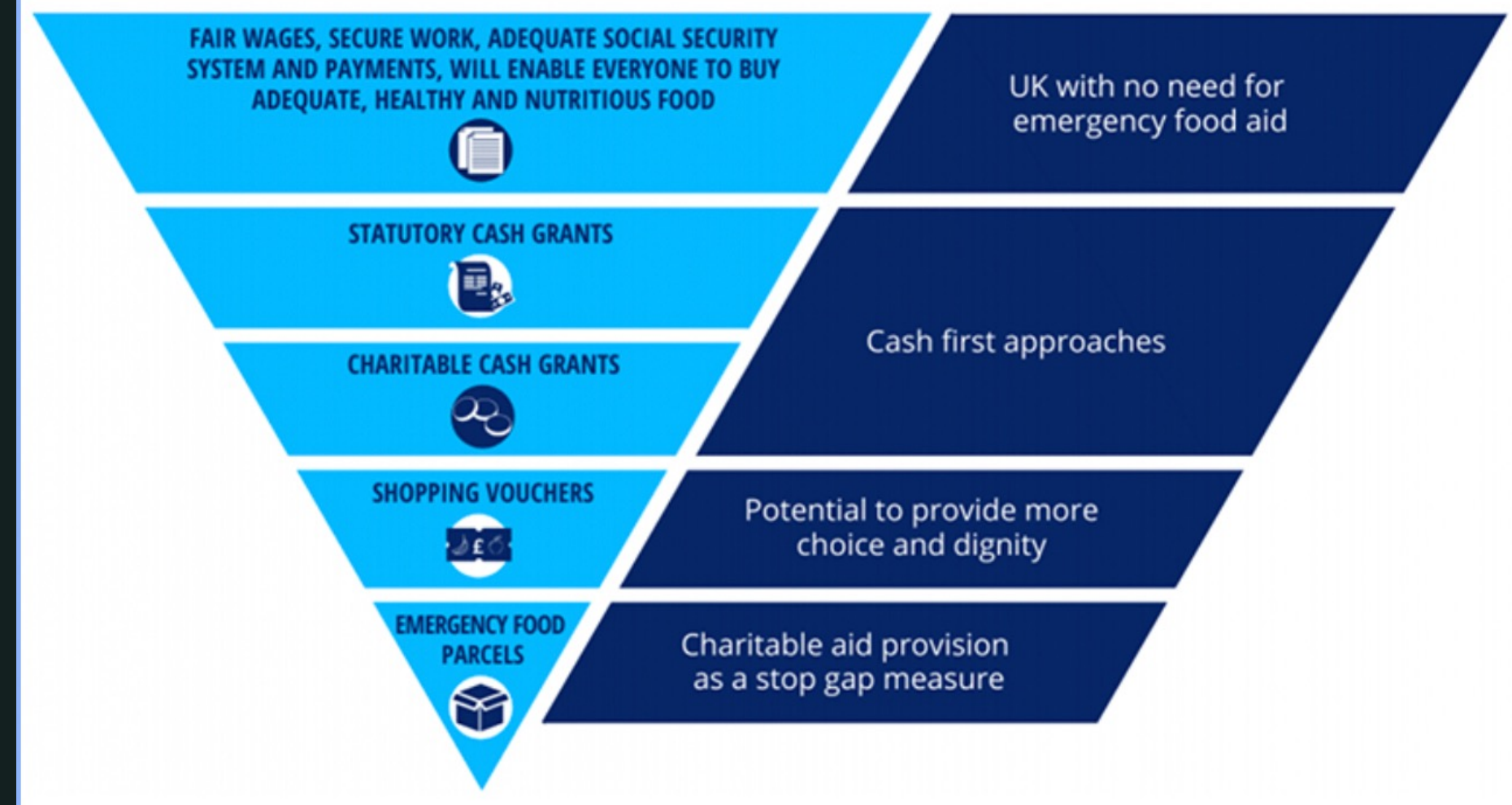
*"We believe it's critical to extend the remit of the plan's vision to "end the need for charitable food aid as a response to food insecurity".*

*Charitable food aid comes in a myriad of forms and many organisations currently distributing food aid may continue to have a role in the future as community food venues. If we are to meet the aim of ending the need for charitable food aid, however, everyone taking part in these initiatives would be there out of choice not due to inadequate income.*

*In a future without the need for charitable food aid, food surplus redistributors like FareShare would no longer be used to plug gaps left by insufficient social security payments and poorly paid and insecure jobs.*

*Overproduction and poor supply management of some types of food would be addressed separately and disentangled from efforts to mitigate the impact of poverty."*

Diagram 1: Independent Food Aid Network's hierarchy of responses





Joint letter to  
26.3.23.

**The Observer**

Dr Kavleigh Garthwaite, University of Birmingham; Professor Graham

**Guaranteeing food for all**

The extraordinary efforts of food bank teams, increasingly backed by corporate involvement, should not blind us to the fact that an emergency food parcel cannot do more than temporarily alleviate hunger. The latest plea for an essentials guarantee from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, the Trussell Trust and others is testament to the reality that growing reliance on food banks is an ineffective substitute for poverty-reducing policies.

All 38 member countries of the OECD now rely on a privatised charitable food aid model, often dependent on volunteer labour. The ubiquity of corporate food charity in high-income countries should provide a stark warning.

The European Federation of Food Banks and the Global Foodbanking Network operate in 76

including low- and mi states. Their mission is “the presence and infl banks all over the worl

While the expansion surplus food redistrib seem like a win-win sc

While the expansion of organised surplus food redistribution might seem like a win-win solution, this practice fails to reduce food waste levels while undermining policies designed to address food insecurity. We need long-term solutions based on rights and social justice. Only governments can guarantee these rights. Adopting a “cash first” approach to food insecurity is vital to ensure people can access income before charity, but equally vital is the prioritisation of systemic changes to truly tackle poverty and inequality.

truly tackle poverty and i  
Guaranteeing the right  
and a living income thro  
living wages, together wit

University of London; Professor Jon May, Queen Mary University of Londo  
Dr Dave Beck, University of Salford; Dr Andy Williams, Cardiff University;  
Imogen Richmond-Bishop; Dr Madeleine Power, York University; Dr Clare  
Pettinger, University of Plymouth; Professor Stephanie Lemke, University

Palmer, UNESCO Chair on Food Biodiversity and Sustainability Studies;  
Robin Burgess; Dr Lopamudra Patnaik Saxena, Coventry University; Dr  
Alison Briggs, University of Manchester; Prof Lisa Scullion, University of  
Salford; Adrienne Montani, Executive Director, First Call Child and Youth

Guaranteeing the right to food and a living income through real living wages, together with adequate social security provision, is essential to ending the need for charitable food aid in all societies.

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[www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk](http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk)

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