April 2024

​

Dear [MP Name] MP,

​

I am writing to ask that you urgently work to address the root causes of growing poverty and food insecurity in our constituency. No one should have to turn to charity to be able to eat. Yet, over the last 14 years, increasing numbers of people have been pushed to the doors of independent food banks and other charitable food aid providers because they haven’t got enough money to afford food.

​

As the UK poverty crisis has escalated, the charitable food aid sector has been pushed past breaking point. [Recent data](http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/data) from the [Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN)](http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/) has consistently found that food bank teams are being overstretched and overwhelmed by rising demand.

Food banks and other food aid services are being asked to do the impossible as they do their utmost to support growing numbers of people unable to afford food. These include both people in work whose wages are not enough to cover the cost of living as well as people who are already receiving all their social security entitlements but are still not able to make ends meet.

In the past decade, the provision of charitable food aid in the UK has proved to be an ineffective and unsustainable response to the problem of poverty. Food banks and other food aid groups can only ever provide a temporary sticking plaster to the problem of hunger. What’s more, according to data from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) most households reporting severe food insecurity do not access a food bank.[[1]](#footnote-1)

IFAN advocates for a ‘cash first’ (income-focused) approach to food insecurity and campaigns to see a country without the need for charitable food aid. Not only do cash first interventions provide more dignity and choice to people facing financial hardship but they are effective at reducing food insecurity. The temporary £20 uplift to Universal Credit reduced moderate to severe food insecurity in households on Universal Credit by 16%.

IFAN is calling on the UK Government to take immediate actions to address food insecurity through a cash first approach including:

* the adoption of [an Essentials Guarantee](https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/guarantee-our-essentials) - a step towards providing an adequate social security safety net for all
* the removal of the benefit cap, the two-child limit, sanctions, the five-week wait for Universal Credit, benefit deductions and No Recourse to Public Funds status
* the permanent extension of the Household Support Fund (currently due to end on 30th of September 2024) to enable local authorities to provide crisis support via cash payments in every area
* ensuring employers pay a real Living Wage and provide job security
* investment in local advice services

Like IFAN, I would like to see the end for the need for charitable food aid in the UK. I look forward to hearing from you about how the UK’s growing poverty crisis can be effectively tackled both in the short and long term.

Yours sincerely,

[Name/Email/Any other contact details]

1. 86% households reporting severe food insecurity were found not to be accessing a food bank. Department for Work and Pensions, Family Resources Survey, 2021-2022, ​​<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-resources-survey--2>. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)