

# Emergency food parcel distribution in Wales

April 2024 – March 2025

21 May 2025

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# 2024/25: Key facts across Wales

This factsheet reports on the number of emergency food parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales during the period 1 April 2024 to 30 March 2025 (inclusive). During this time, food parcels were distributed from 146 locations across Wales, as part of the Trussell community.<sup>1</sup>

Data from the Trussell community is just one part of the picture of need across the Wales. There is a wide range of charitable food provision supporting people in communities that is not captured in this data. There are also many people who are food insecure who do not access support from any form of charitable food provision.<sup>2</sup>

- Emergency food provision in Wales remains concerningly high. Compared with 2021/22, the start of this Senedd term, provision has increased 31%. Over the last decade, provision has almost doubled.
- Positive steps in policy and practice in Wales have been important in stemming the rising tide of severe hardship. However, there are clear warning signs that food bank need is either being displaced to alternative providers or simply left unmet.
- Trends vary, and South Wales Central, North Wales, and South Wales West all saw sharp rises in provision compared with five years ago. Nearly two-thirds of parcels go to families with children.
- Food banks are struggling under the weight of persistent poverty. Many people seeking help still cannot afford the essentials, even after acting on advice and support.
- The shockingly high levels of hunger and hardship in 2024/25 should serve as a wake-up call ahead of 2026 elections. All political parties must take a stand and commit to reducing the need for food banks in Wales. While key social security policy levers lie with Westminster, the Welsh Government has vital powers to draw on to tackle the severe hardship facing Welsh communities. Any party seeking office has both a moral and economic duty to build a future where no-one in Wales needs a food bank to get by.

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<sup>1</sup> The locations from which food banks distributed parcels are counted if they have distributed food parcels at any stage during the time period. Some will have opened, and some will have closed during this period. For reference there were 147 locations in Wales in the same period in the previous year.

<sup>2</sup> Research produced by Trussell in partnership with Ipsos found that in the 12 months to mid-2022 one in five (20%) people across Wales had experienced food insecurity, equating to an estimated 753,000 people. However, three in four (74%) people experiencing food insecurity reported that they have not used any form of food aid in the last year. Hunger in Wales (2023), Trussell, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/publications/hunger-in-the-uk>

# Emergency food provision in Wales has yet to return to pre-pandemic levels, embedding a 'new normal'

Food banks in the Trussell community in Wales distributed 172,000 emergency food parcels between 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. This is a slight decrease (-9%) compared to the same period in 2023-24 when 188,000 parcels were distributed, the most parcels ever distributed in a year. The level of need seen across food banks in the Trussell community in Wales this year remains close to these record levels.

The longer-term trend is stark. The number of parcels distributed in 2024/25 by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales is 26% higher than the number distributed five years ago, in 2019/20, and has almost doubled (95%) over the last ten years.

For the third year in a row, food banks in the Trussell community in Wales have distributed over 60,000 parcels to children. This marks a 16% increase since 2019/20, including an 8% rise in parcels to support children under the age of five over the same period, and reflecting the wider rise (19%) in parcels provided to families with children over the past five years.

The figures make it clear that we are yet to return to (already high) pre-pandemic levels of emergency food provision in the Trussell community. There is a real risk that, without any significant shift, we are facing a new normal of extraordinarily high levels of severe financial hardship in our communities.

“

I feel like I'm stuck in a never-ending loop. Every month I pay my whole wages out to some other company for normal everyday things. I have no income left, no savings. I'm quite fed up of everything right now

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Male, 30s, Wales. Participant in 'The Cost of Hunger and Hardship'.<sup>3</sup>

## Persistently high need far outweighs positive steps in policy and provision

Emergency food parcel provision remains close to record levels first and foremost due to a weakened social security system that is unable to protect people from the most severe forms of hardship, forcing more people to the doors of food banks. The soaring cost of living and COVID-19

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<sup>3</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025), *The Cost of Hunger and Hardship*, Trussell, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/publications/report/cost-of-hunger-and-hardship-final-report>

pandemic drew more people into hardship, but it is the longer-term failings of our social security system which continues to push people into hunger and hardship.

As noted in our Mid-Year Statistics update, easing pressure on household finances have helped to prevent further rises in emergency food provision and contributed to the slight decrease in provision. At a devolved level in Wales, this includes:

- The rollout of free school meals to all primary age children from September 2024
- The impact of the change to the notice period for no fault evictions from 2 months to 6 months in 2023
- The development of multi-sectoral food partnerships in all local authority areas, with a dedicated resource to tackle food poverty locally, which has gradually increased in coverage since 2022
- Additional funding from the Welsh Government to the Fuel Bank Foundation to provide fuel voucher and heat fund schemes, as well as the rollout of warm hubs and Welsh government funding for 'multibanks'.

At a UK level, this includes overall high inflation easing and policy choices like maintaining CPI inflation to uprate benefits (increasing benefits by September 2023 CPI of 6.7%, when actual inflation had fallen by April 2024) and unfreezing the Local Housing Allowance rates from April 2024, re-linking support for private renters to the most affordable 30% of local rents.

Efforts from food banks to improve access to support which addresses people's underlying financial hardship may also have contributed in some local areas. For example, some food banks have described working more closely with referral partners to improve referral processes, so people get access to the right support more quickly. The majority of food bank charities in the Trussell community in Wales now also provide access to some form of financial inclusion support – that is, support or advice on money matters. A recent evaluation shows how this support can make a tangible difference to people's finances.<sup>4</sup>

However, current additional provision at food banks does not have the capacity to address financial hardship at scale. Moreover, we know that even where financial inclusion services are in place, advisors are regularly finding people still cannot make ends meet even after people have exhausted all options to maximise their income. The overall decrease in the number of parcels distributed also covers a mixed picture across Wales, as explored further below. Most importantly, there is clear evidence that a slight decrease in provision does not necessarily reflect a decrease in need, with some factors standing out from our review of food banks' experiences.

- First, as reported in November, we are hearing even more clearly that many food banks are struggling to keep up with the need in their communities. Many food banks are having to carefully manage resources and capacity at a time of extremely high need.

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<sup>4</sup> Through income gains, debts managed, and debts written off it was estimated an average financial impact of around £1,000 was achieved per person accessing a Trussell advice service. Finney, et al, (2024), *Evaluating the advice and support services provided through food banks*, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/publications/evaluation/evaluating-our-money-matters-advice-and-support-services>

- Second, there are many cases when local authorities and other services in an area are struggling or having to cut back provision, making it more difficult for people in those areas to be referred to the Trussell community.
- Third, parcels provided through signposting from Jobcentres are substantially down on previous years<sup>5</sup>, likely due to the renewal of the Department for Work and Pensions position that Jobcentres should not formally refer people to food banks. In some cases, referrals will simply have gone through other agencies instead but, in some areas, the additional step is likely to have delayed or prevented access to emergency food.
- Fourth, food banks report that the food aid landscape continues to diversify, with people accessing different forms of charitable food aid from providers outside the Trussell community.

Taken together, the picture our 2024/25 evidence paints is one of unrelentingly high levels of severe hardship in our communities. Any green shoots from inflation easing, policy choices under the previous UK government and Welsh government, or action by food banks themselves, are far outweighed by persistently high need that is either now having to be increasingly supported by other similar charitable community support or simply unmet.

As flagged in November, wider data from Citizens Advice caseload figures, deep poverty trends, to the latest Family Resources Survey data on food bank use, bears out that the level of severe hardship in the UK is far from easing.<sup>6</sup>

The evidence all points to headline trends in emergency food provision that reflect a high level of hunger and hardship in our communities, which show no signs of meaningful change. It is also increasingly clear from speaking with food banks in the Trussell community that it is impossible for food banks to have the capacity and resources to turn this tide. Without others playing their part, particularly government at all levels, we are placing an unrealistic and increasingly overwhelming burden on volunteer-led community provision like food banks.

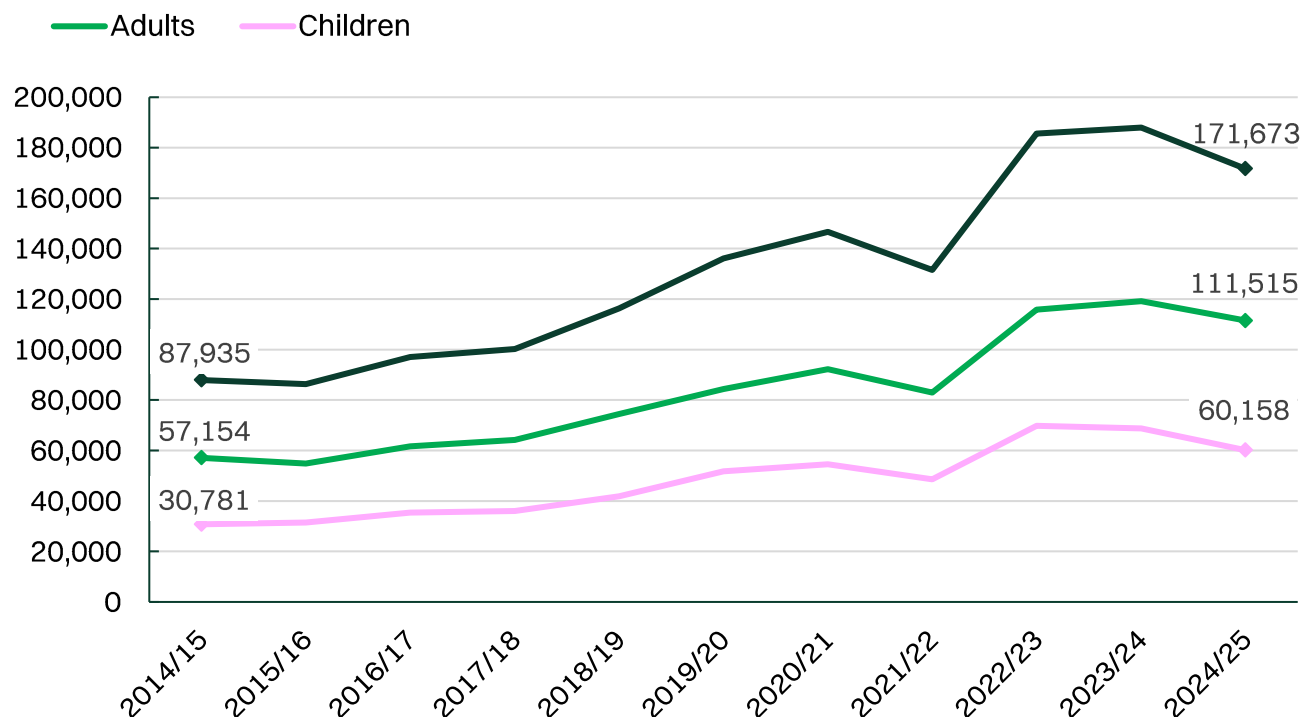
**Table 1 Number of parcels for adults, children, and total distributed, UK: 2019/20-2024/25**

	FY 2024/25			Percentage change from 2019/20			Percentage change from 2023/24		
	Adults	Children	Total	Adults	Children	Total	Adults	Children	Total
United Kingdom	1,860,909	1,024,177	2,885,086	57%	41%	51%	-6%	-11%	-8%
England	1,541,71	855,142	2,396,853	68%	49%	61%	-6%	-10%	-7%
Scotland	162,424	77,079	239,503	3%	-5%	<1%	-9%	-11%	-10%
Wales	111,515	60,158	171,673	32%	16%	26%	-6%	-13%	-9%
Northern Ireland	45,259	31,798	77,057	73%	68%	71%	-13%	-18%	-15%

Source: Trussell administrative data on the number of emergency food parcels distributed across the UK.

<sup>5</sup> In 2022/23 referrals from Jobcentres made up 4% of the total referrals to food banks in the Trussell community across the UK, this was down to 1% this year (2024/25).

<sup>6</sup> Trussell (2024), *Emergency food parcel distribution in the UK: April-September 2024*, <https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-11/MYS%202024%20UK%20factsheet.pdf>

**Figure 1 Number of emergency food parcels distributed, Wales: 2014/15-2024/25<sup>7</sup>**

Source: Trussell administrative data.

## Food banks in Wales are witnessing a deepening and more prolonged level of severe hardship

There has been a considerable amount of people who have newly faced hunger and hardship in 2024/25, with 18,200 households<sup>8</sup> forced to turn to a food bank for the first time this year. These households included 39,296 people (25,825 adults and 13,471 children). This is a 17% decrease compared to the same period last year (2023/24). The decrease seen this year suggests that provision over the last year in Wales has been driven to a greater extent by people needing to return to a food bank rather than people needing support for the first time.

In line with this, food banks have told us that they are now supporting people who are experiencing a deepening and more prolonged level of hardship. They are seeing people who are stuck in a cycle of financial difficulty, living in increasingly challenging situations, which are putting immense pressure

<sup>7</sup> The number of food bank centres has increased over this ten-year period. While increased provision is associated with some increase in food parcel take-up, this is relatively small in proportional terms. Increased provision of food banks results in increased uptake primarily because of the underlying unmet need in an area. See Bramley, G, et al. (2021), *State of Hunger: Building the evidence on poverty, destitution, and food insecurity in the UK*, Trussell and Heriot-Watt University, <https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/wp-assets/State-of-Hunger-2021-Report-Final.pdf>

<sup>8</sup> Trussell have previously used the word 'family' to define this measure. Households include individuals living alone, single parents, or multi-generational households. Households also include people that are homeless or with no fixed address.

on people's mental health. This reflects wider trends, which show a long-term increase in people living in very deep poverty, with incomes far below the standard poverty line.<sup>9</sup>

“

**I don't want to see a food bank in [our community]. It's very aspirational to say that. We don't want one, but the reality is people are living in perpetual poverty.**

”

### **Food bank in the Trussell community in Wales**

Consistent with previous years, over four in ten people (43%) referred to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales needed to use a food bank more than once this year. Almost three in ten people (29%) used the food bank two-three times, and one in eight (13%) four-nine times. A small, but notable, minority of people (1%) made over 10 visits to the food bank to access emergency food. Notably, we have also seen a small, but statistically significant, increase in the average number of visits over the last five years – from 2.2 visits in 2019/20 to 2.6 visits in 2024/25 in the UK. This trend is also seen in repeat visits to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales. This further indicates that there are more people for whom support from a food bank is not a one-off emergency at a point of crisis, but a means of managing a more entrenched level of need.

“

**You're constantly feeling low, you're constantly stressing, you don't sleep, you're worrying about who's ringing you, you're on constant phone calls, you're worrying about who's knocking on the door and it just raises your stress levels, raises your blood pressure... You can't afford to buy the healthy things so your whole physical side goes down, you're tired, you're lethargic, you're not giving your best in work because you just haven't got the energy.**

”

**Female, 50s, Wales, has children. Participant in 'The Cost of Hunger and Hardship'.<sup>10</sup>**

## **Trends vary widely, including across Wales**

As Table 1 shows, there have been decreases across the UK from the previous year in the number of parcels distributed, with Northern Ireland seeing the biggest decrease (-15%), followed by Scotland (-10%), Wales (-9%), and England (-7%). The decrease in number of parcels distributed for children in Wales is broadly in line with the UK average.

The picture of provision by food banks in Wales is mixed. Despite an overall decrease in number of parcels distributed in Wales this year, South Wales East has seen a 6% increase, albeit from a low base compared with other Senedd regions (Table 2).<sup>11</sup> Conversely, Mid and West Wales (-14%) and

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2025), *UK Poverty 2025*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/uk-poverty-2025-the-essential-guide-to-understanding-poverty-in-the-uk>

<sup>10</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025)

<sup>11</sup> South Wales East parcel numbers are comparatively low, even after considering regional population. For population estimates, see: <https://www.gov.wales/data-senedd-cymru-constituency-areas-2021>.



North Wales (-14%) have seen above-average decreases in the numbers of emergency food parcels distributed.

When looking longer term, food banks in South Wales Central (40%) have seen the biggest increase in the number of parcels distributed since 2019/20. There are also large increases seen in North Wales (34%) and South Wales West (28%).

As discussed above, the differences in parcel numbers across the Senedd regions does not necessarily reflect higher or lower levels of need in those areas. It may be that the need is being picked up by different food aid providers in the area, or changes to services in some areas have made it harder for people to be referred to the Trussell community.

**Table 2 Number of parcels for adults, children, and total distributed – Senedd region breakdown: 2024/25, compared with 2019/20 and 2023/24**

	2024/25			Percentage change from 2019/20			Percentage change from 2023/24		
	Adults	Children	Total	Adults	Children	Total	Adults	Children	Total
Mid and West Wales	17,854	9,650	27,504	15%	-1%	9%	-13%	-18%	-14%
North Wales	18,471	10,147	28,618	46%	17%	34%	-12%	-18%	-14%
South Wales Central	24,559	13,411	37,970	46%	30%	40%	0%	-7%	-3%
South Wales East	8,112	3,941	12,053	11%	-3%	6%	11%	-2%	6%
South Wales West	42,519	23,009	65,528	33%	21%	28%	-8%	-12%	-9%
<b>Wales</b>	<b>111,515</b>	<b>60,158</b>	<b>171,673</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>-13%</b>	<b>-9%</b>

Source: Trussell administrative data on the number of emergency food parcels distributed across Wales

## Some groups are particularly at risk of needing support from food banks

### Children continue to be disproportionately supported by food banks

“

The inflation in prices and general increase in daily expenditure is making the future look bleak and unmanageable.

”

Male, 20s, Wales, has children. Participant in 'The Cost of Hunger and Hardship'.<sup>12</sup>

While there has been a slight decrease in the number of parcels for children this year, the distribution of support provided by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales continues to be weighted towards children.

Comparing the distribution of food parcels by age to the distribution of people within those age categories in Wales (Figure 2), we see a notable difference for children aged 0-16. The proportion of parcels distributed to children aged 0-16 (35%) is almost double their population share across Wales (18%).<sup>13</sup> At the other end of the scale, just 3% of parcels distributed by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales are for people aged 65 and over, despite them making up 22% of the population in Wales.

“

So it does have an effect on the kids. They know that we struggle. There's been times where he's got no money on his ParentPay. So...when he goes to a dinner queue and they go, you can't have food, you've got no money. And apparently they're not very quiet about it, I've been told... So that doesn't help their mental health and it doesn't help them in school because you're gonna need food. Food is fuel.

”

Female, 50s, Wales, has children. Participant in 'The Cost of Hunger and Hardship'.<sup>14</sup>

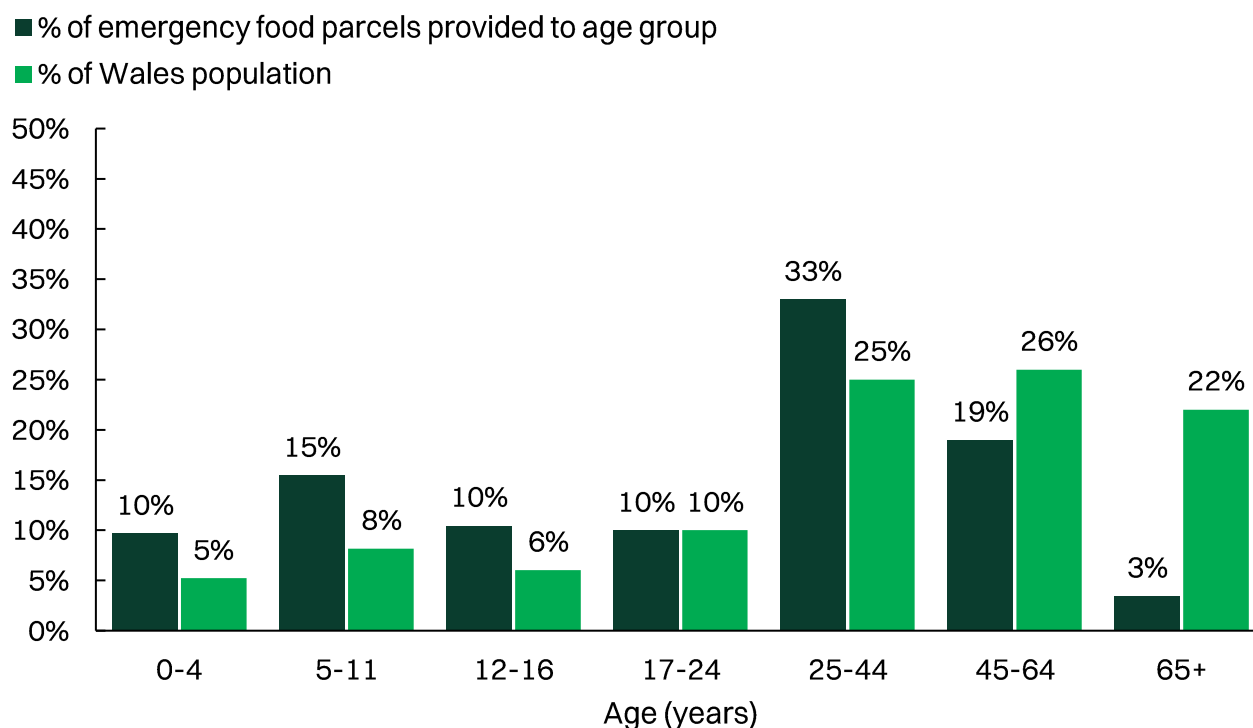
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<sup>12</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025)

<sup>13</sup> ONS, (2024), *Estimates of the population for UK, England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland*, <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/datasets/populationestimatesforukenglandandwalesscotlandandnorthernireland>

<sup>14</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025)

**Figure 2 Percentage of emergency food parcels distributed for different age groups compared to population distribution, Wales: 2019/20-2024/25**

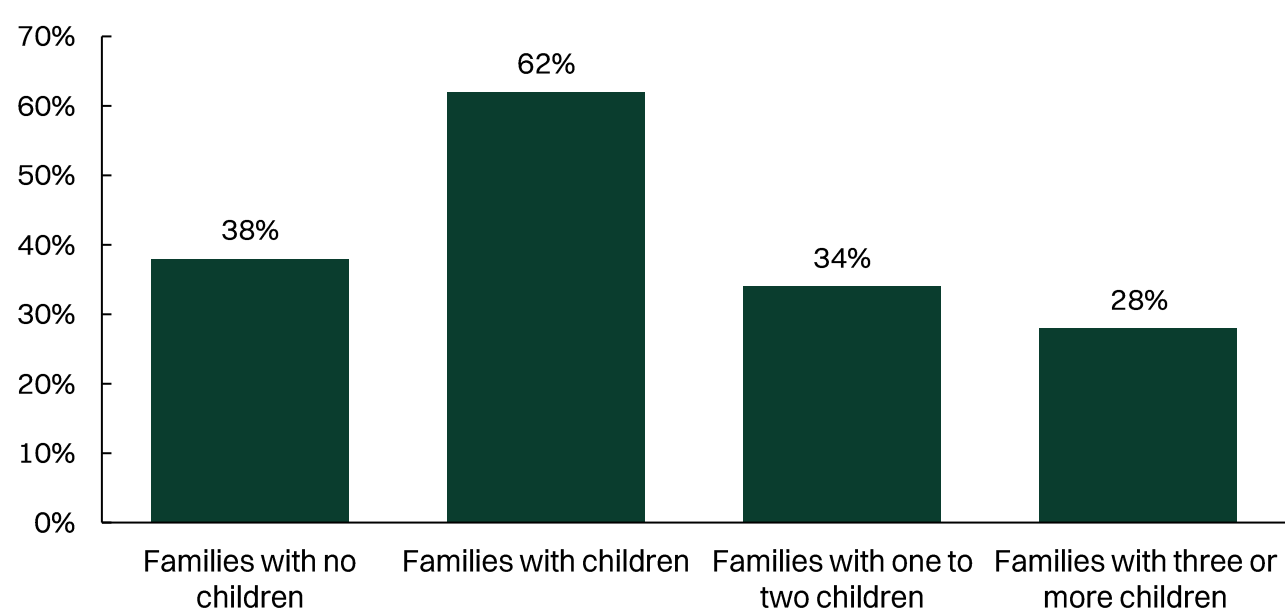


Source: Trussell administrative data and ONS population estimates.

As reported on in our Mid-Year Statistics, we have seen a slight change in the trend in growth in parcels for children in comparison to adults. Unlike previous years, growth in parcels for children no longer outstrips or matches the growth in parcels for adults. The latest five-year trend (2019/20 – 2024/25), shows a 32% increase for adults and a 16% increase for children in parcels provided. It is too early to tell if this is a one-off or a longer-term shift. It is too early to tell if this is a longer-term shift towards adults driving more of the growth in emergency food parcels provided.

When taking a whole household view, the majority (62%) of support provided by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales is for families with children (Figure 3). A significant minority (28%) of parcels were provided to families with three or more children.

Figure 3 Percentage of emergency food parcels distributed by family type, Wales: 2024/2025



Source: Trussell administrative data.

## Food bank provision for pensioners is still rising

While it is from a low base, and they are still significantly under-represented (Figure 2), there is a large increase in emergency food provided for pension age adults by food banks in the Trussell community in Wales. In 2024-25, 4,700 parcels were distributed for someone aged 65 and over. This is more than double the number provided in 2019/20 when 1,800 parcels were distributed. As seen in Table 3, the rate of growth for pension aged adults is by far the highest growth rate for any age group across this period.<sup>15</sup>

Table 3 Percentage increase in the number of parcels by age group, Wales: 2019/20 – 2024/25

Age	Percentage increase from 2019/20
0-4	8%
5-11	14%
12-16	40%
17-24	26%
25-64	30%
65+	154%

Source: Trussell administrative data.

<sup>15</sup> Age ranges differ to the previous figure as Trussell updated the age categories it collected in 2023. To allow comparison to pre-2023 data the age categories for 2024 have been recoded to the pre-2023 codes.

This long-term trend can also be seen when we look at the number of parcels distributed by household type in Wales. Since 2019, the number of parcels for families with at least one person aged 65 and over living in the household has more than doubled (up 142%). While this is from a low base, this is six times the increase for families without anyone aged 65 and over living in the household (see Table 4).

**Table 4 Number of parcels distributed by household type, Wales: 2024/25, compared with 2019/20 and 2023/24**

Household type	Number of parcels, 2024/25	Percentage change from 2019/20	Percentage change from 2023/24
Families with children	106,150	19%	-12%
Families without children	65,523	39%	-2%
Families with one to two children	58,125	22%	-12%
Families with three or more children	48,025	16%	-13%
Families with someone aged 65 or over	7,976	142%	-7%
Families without someone aged 65 or over	157,907	23%	-8%

Source: Trussell administrative data.

## People need support from a food bank because their income is insufficient to meet the cost of essentials

Referral data from food banks in the Trussell community in Wales continues to support wider evidence that people need to use a food bank because their incomes are too low and insufficient to cover the cost of essentials and/or is driving people into unmanageable situations (71% of referrals). From looking at the specific reasons selected, concern around the increasing cost of essentials is particularly prevalent. This is often coupled with issues with benefits such as long waits, delays or sanctions which affect a significant minority of referrals to food banks (22%).

**Table 5: Reasons for referral for people supported by food banks, Wales: 2024/25**

Reason for referral	% of referrals with reason selected
Income or debt	71%
Issue with benefits	22%
Health	21%
Insecure housing	10%
Change in work hours or unemployment	6%

Change in personal circumstances	5%
Domestic abuse	2%
Immigration status	2%

Source: Trussell administrative data. Data entry is multiple choice – referral partners could select up to four responses. Data has been recoded to combine categories.

Wider Trussell research has consistently shown that inadequate and insecure incomes are the primary driver of food bank need. People referred to food banks have usually exhausted all possible finances before a food bank referral, don't have enough money to live on and are regularly unable to afford essential items such as food and heating. Most people referred to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales are in receipt of some form of income from social security, with the design and delivery of the social security system being a major contributor to people being unable to afford essentials.<sup>16</sup> This is reflected in the sources of income for people referred to the Trussell community (Table 6). The vast majority (83%) of people referred to food banks in Wales in 2024/25 report their sole source of income is social security, with a further 6% having earned income as well as income from social security.



**You're trying to make ends meet on £350 a month or whatever that individual is actually getting [from Universal Credit]. I mean, we're supporting a gentleman at the moment who came in this morning and somebody asked me can he come in every week for five weeks? I was like, absolutely, he's been sanctioned 5 weeks, because he went to GP appointment and missed his appointment with his work coach.**



### **Food bank in the Trussell community in Wales**

Paid work is also not always a solution in reducing the risk of needing a food bank. This year, over one in ten (10%) people referred to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales were earning (Table 6). Low pay and insecure jobs can leave people with insufficient income to afford the essentials. Households who reported that they were receiving earned income and benefits, or solely earned income, were also more likely to be referred due to a change in their work hours or unemployment than the overall average (Table 7).

**Table 6: Source of income for people referred to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales: 2024/25**

Source of income	% of referrals
Benefits, not earning	83%
Earnings and benefits	6%
Earning, no benefits	4%
No income or insufficient access to it	7%

Source: Trussell administrative data.

<sup>16</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2023), *Hunger in the UK*, Trussell, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/publications/hunger-in-the-uk>

## Health is a notable trigger for referrals to food banks

Beyond income, problems with health are reported as a reason for referral in over one in five (21%) referrals to food banks in the Trussell community in Wales (Table 7). Illness and disability drive up costs for households and a lack of healthcare, appropriate employment support, and accessible jobs can make it difficult to find or sustain suitable work. Our recent research found that severe hardship affects people's mental and physical health, cutting people off from the things that make life enjoyable, with financial situations often exacerbating, or contributing to, the development of mental and physical health problems.<sup>17</sup>

Households who report that they have no income or limited access to it have distinct reasons for referral. The most common of these is issues with their immigration status (24%), which is far higher than average (2%). The majority of people moving into the UK to join family, work or study, have 'no recourse to public funds' (NRPF), meaning they are unable to access many mainstream benefits and are at high risk of experiencing severe hardship.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation report that since 2019, there has been a 92% increase in the number of migrant households experiencing destitution, with long waits for an asylum decision, lack of support once people are granted refugee status, and a lack of access to both cash and in-kind forms of support playing a key part in driving this increase.<sup>19</sup>

**Table 7: Reason for referral amongst households with different income sources, Wales: 2024/25**

Reason for referral	Benefits, not earning	Benefits, earning	No benefits, earning	No income, or insufficient access to it	Total % of referrals with reason selected
Income or debt	73%	79%	73%	40%	71%
Issue with benefits	23%	17%	12%	29%	22%
Health	22%	18%	18%	16%	21%
Insecure housing	10%	5%	8%	13%	10%
Change in work hours or unemployment	5%	21%	18%	11%	6%
Change in personal circumstances	5%	6%	6%	7%	5%
Domestic abuse	2%	3%	3%	3%	3%
Immigration status	<1%	<1%	10%	24%	2%

Source: Trussell administrative data. Data entry was multiple choice – referral partners could select up to four responses. Data has been recoded to combine categories.

<sup>17</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025), *The Cost of Hunger and Hardship*, Trussell, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/publications/report/cost-of-hunger-and-hardship-final-report>

<sup>18</sup> Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2023), *Protection for everyone in our communities*, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/neighbourhoods-and-communities/protection-for-everyone-in-our-communities>

<sup>19</sup> Fitzpatrick, S, et al. (2023), *Destitution in the UK 2023*, Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Heriot Watt University, <https://www.jrf.org.uk/deep-poverty-and-destitution/destitution-in-the-uk-2023>

# Food banks remain deeply concerned about the future

“

I think by the end of last year... we were all feeling quite deflated and I'm going to be quite honest here and say that I felt like I was fighting the losing battle.

I think that we just, whatever we do, we want people to see us as a place that they can come and it's welcoming and it's safe and we'll see them and hear them and we will acknowledge them. But, you know, we also don't want this to be their forever.

”

## Food bank in the Trussell community

Food bank staff and volunteers in Wales continue to provide a critical service in their communities. They have repeatedly adapted their operational practices to meet a 26% increase in need for their support in the last five years.

Food banks provide a lifeline for so many people facing hardship, but they shouldn't have to exist in a just and compassionate society. They also weren't set up to respond to this level of need. Food banks have told us that they are struggling to keep up with need in their communities. Reduced donations mean many food banks are having to purchase food themselves and therefore must also manage high food prices (following recent high inflation) within their limited budgets.

“

So we've got about 30 [volunteers] on the books. The youngest is 64, the oldest is 83. And their work ethic is just mind blowing

”

## Food bank in the Trussell community in Wales

Despite food banks' concerted work to increase access to wider advice and support, particularly on money matters, food banks continue to report that people across their communities do not have enough to afford the essentials. They are seeing people living in persistent poverty, who continue to need support from a food bank because incomes, even when maximised, are insufficient to match the cost of living.

Food banks remain deeply concerned about the future. The proposed reforms to disability benefits set out in the UK government's Spring Statement have been prominent in our conversations with food banks in recent months. These concerns are borne out when data shows the already disproportionate risk of severe hardship facing disabled families. 230,000 people living in disabled families in Wales face severe hardship now, with people living in disabled families in Wales much more likely to experience severe hardship than people in a non-disabled family (16% vs 11%).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Weekes, T, et al (2025), *The cost of hunger and hardship in Wales*, [https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Cost%20of%20Hunger%20and%20Hardship\\_Wales.pdf](https://cms.trussell.org.uk/sites/default/files/2024-10/Cost%20of%20Hunger%20and%20Hardship_Wales.pdf)





**It's a worrying time. So whilst we've done everything we can up to this point...It's what happens next...we've got around...22% of people using our service because they've got an ongoing mental and physical health condition. So , whilst we've seen a decrease this year, with the PIP application changing and the access to disability benefits changing my concern would be how will that number be affected because that is a high percentage of people accessing the service.**



### **Food bank in the Trussell community**

Food banks are already supporting people whose only option is to cut spending on essential items, who have been making impossible decisions between necessities for some time. They are concerned about the long-lasting impact that going without essentials is having on people in their community, and that more people will be pushed into requiring emergency food in the face of the UK government's plans to cut disability benefits.



**We stay in the bedroom all day under the quilt to keep warm. My husband works part time as he cares for me so it's also safer for me to stay in the bedroom as I have epilepsy and if I had a seizure in another room, I'd be left there with no heating until he came home from work.**



### **Person claiming Universal Credit in Wales interviewed in February 2025<sup>21</sup>**

Food banks continue to support people in their communities facing hunger and hardship with resilience, strength and compassion. However, food banks are neither the right nor sustainable response to people going without essentials because their incomes are too low. The impact of severe hardship is harming people's chances of finding or keeping work; damaging people's health, education, and housing security; and worsening people's future employment and wages strains our public services and holds back our economy. It is only through building a society where everyone can afford the essentials that we can unlock the potential in our communities and remove the need for emergency food. We know what's needed to end the need for food banks, and we know that it is achievable if we make the right decisions.

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<sup>21</sup> An online survey by YouGov of 131 adults (16+) currently claiming Universal Credit in Wales. Fieldwork was undertaken 21 January – 3 February 2025

# We have an opportunity to turn the tide on hunger and hardship

**Appalling levels of hunger and hardship in Wales should serve as a wake-up call for all political parties ahead of May 2026.** 420,000 people in Wales are experiencing hunger and hardship.<sup>22</sup>

People need to turn to food banks because they don't have enough money for the essentials. Some are between jobs, have health conditions or are looking after relatives and children. Some people are in work that's insecure, inaccessible, and doesn't pay enough to live on. And the lack of affordable childcare, housing, and transport are further barriers holding too many people back from opportunities to increase their income.

**Hunger is not a food problem, it's an income problem.** Our social security system is supposed to protect people from hunger and poverty, but right now problems in the design and delivery of social security are the biggest and most immediate drivers of need for food banks. Benefit levels are too low, payments are reduced further still by deductions and caps, and people struggle to access the support for which they are eligible.

**Both the Welsh and UK governments have a moral and economic responsibility to tackle hunger in Wales.** The levels and depth of severe hardship faced by people in Wales who need to use a food bank not only affects individuals; it also has a devastating impact on public finances and the Welsh economy. Hunger and hardship are linked to worse health, educational outcomes and housing security, and failure to address this leads to increased spending of £560 million on areas devolved to the Welsh Government alone - the NHS, other health services, schools, children's social care, and tackling homelessness.<sup>23</sup>

**Tackling poverty must be the number one priority for all political parties in 2026 Senedd elections.** With less than a year until Wales goes to the polls, all political parties must take a stand and commit to reducing the need for food banks in Wales, putting tackling poverty at the heart of their manifestos.

During the Sixth Senedd, the Welsh Government has shown an understanding and commitment to supporting food banks in Wales and tackling the need for emergency food. Widened access to free school meals, commitments to improve access to Welsh benefits, and the introduction of food partnerships across local authorities in Wales are evidence of this commitment to tackling the problems that many people needing to use a food bank are facing.

However, despite these positive steps, the level of need for food banks has increased sharply since the beginning of this Senedd term. Compared with 2021/22, the number of emergency food parcels provided by the Trussell community increased 31% in 2024/25.

This in part reflects a challenging economic environment, and key social security levers sitting with UK government. Nevertheless, Welsh Government can and must use all available devolved powers

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<sup>22</sup> Weekes, T, et al, (2025)

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

to ensure incomes cover essential costs, such as providing cash-first support for people facing financial crisis.

**In the Seventh Senedd, we must see the next Welsh Government go much further, working in partnership with the UK government to ensure everyone can afford the essentials:**

- 1. All parties in Wales should set a clear ambition to reduce the need for emergency food in Wales in their manifestos.** With a laser focus on tackling the root causes of hunger and hardship, working with UK government to strengthen social security and ensuring a strong financial crisis safety net is in place, we can see an end to the need for food banks in Wales. The plan would need to include measures to deliver affordable and adequate housing, address barriers to employment, including skills, travel and childcare, improve access to services for people with physical and mental health problems, and those with caring responsibilities, and a cash-first approach alongside quality advice for people facing financial crisis.
- 2. Raise ambitions for improving access to financial support.** We know many people in Wales are missing out on financial support they are entitled to, which further exacerbates hardship. The work to streamline Welsh benefits, to simplify the process and improve take-up of benefits in Wales is extremely welcome but radical thinking across Welsh Government departments is needed to enable people in Wales to receive the best advice and support, alongside financial support.
- 3. More investment in Wales for cash-first initiatives.** Parties should scope options for introducing cash support for families through a 'Welsh child payment' or similar mechanism, and ensure food partnerships are focused on preventing the need for emergency food.
- 4. Crisis support in Wales should be reviewed to ensure the focus is on reducing the need for emergency food in the future.** The Discretionary Assistance Fund is crucial for households when a crisis or shock event takes place, such as becoming homeless or escaping domestic abuse. Yet the need for emergency support to help people afford essentials, far outweighs the support the DAF is currently set up to provide. A review of crisis support in Wales is needed, with the focus moved towards holistic advice and cash-first support that genuinely helps households out of a crisis.
- 5. Action must be taken to ensure everyone has a quality and affordable home.** Unaffordable and inadequate housing is driving people through the doors of food banks in Wales. Next steps should include accelerated efforts to boost social housing in communities across Wales and support for local authorities to be better able to provide safe and quality temporary accommodation, for the shortest possible time before households can find a more stable home.

Finally, we need **Welsh Government to work with the UK government** to ensure the design and delivery of fundamental parts of our social security system allows everyone in Wales to afford the essentials. In particular, the UK government must stop planned cuts to Personal Independence Payment and health payments within Universal Credit, and update Universal Credit with steps towards an 'Essentials Guarantee'.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> See our UK factsheet for more, <https://www.trussell.org.uk/news-and-research/latest-stats/end-of-year-stats>.

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