

WE ARE THE TRUSSELL TRUST AND WE EXIST SO WE CAN ALL BE FREE FROM HUNGER.

Together, we're more than 1,300 local food bank centres across the UK, providing practical support for people facing hardship.

But emergency food isn't a long-term solution to hunger. People need food banks when they don't have enough money for essentials. That's why we also work with communities across the UK to change the things that push people to need a food bank.

Together, we are thousands of people, working together towards a more just future where none of us need a food bank.

Find out more:
trusselltrust.org



DISCOVER 3 DIFFERENT COLOURED CARDS AND START A CONVERSATION.

Dark Green:

Read these excerpts of stories shared by people who have used a food bank – then discuss the question.

Light Green:

What do you think the right answer is? Have a guess and learn what financial hardship in the UK looks like and the support food banks in our network provide.

Blue:

Use these reflective questions to get a conversation started. What are your thoughts?



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ANEITA'S STORY

After moving from full-time to part-time work to care for her daughter, Aneita's tax credits were stopped. Due to a systems error, Aneita's benefits payments had been overpaid. She was told she owed the government £5000 and was left with no option but to turn to a food bank just to get by.

“Poverty does not discriminate; it can and will single you out through no fault of your own, whether through relationship breakdowns, death, loss of employment, change of employment or mental health. But people shouldn't need food banks. We need a real living wage or benefit that reflects today's cost of living.”

Unexpected, adverse life events increase people's risk of needing a food bank. What changes in your life would make it more challenging to make ends meet?

LOUISE'S STORY

Louise has anxiety, depression, and complex PTSD. Her mental health issues mean she sometimes has periods when she isn't able to work and, when issues with her social security payments left her without enough money, she had no option but to use a food bank.

“The first thing they did at the food bank was give me a cup of tea. They treated me like a human, not just an issue to be solved. When you are battling against bureaucracy, you feel like just a number. Someone giving me a hot drink, asking if I would prefer tea or coffee in my food bank package, made me feel human again.”

Louise speaks about how being given a cup of tea made her feel human again, how it gave her some dignity. Have you ever felt like 'just a number'? Did anyone show you kindness and treat you like a human?

CAROLINE'S STORY

Caroline first needed social security when she was working as a self-employed registered childminder. She found employment in January 2020 but, when the pandemic hit, she was put on furlough and lost 80% of her wages. In August 2020, she was made redundant when the nursery she was working for closed for good.

“Imagine telling your child they can’t go to a birthday party, imagine not having £1 in your purse when your child’s tooth falls out, imagine sitting watching your child eat whilst your own stomach grumbles with hunger as you try to stretch your food bank parcel.

Imagine having no choice over the food in your cupboard as it’s donated to you. It’s not easy walking into a food bank and saying you need help.”

How did you decide what you were going to eat today? Imagine if those options were taken away from you or if you had to eat the same thing day in and day out.

LISA'S STORY

When Lisa lost her mother to cancer and her 11-year relationship with the father of her children ended in the same year, she experienced severe anxiety, stress and depression and wasn't well enough to work. Although she started receiving social security payments, they weren't enough to cover essential costs for herself and her children, so she had no option but to use a food bank.

"I just had to put my children first. I had to prioritise things like fuel to be able to take the children to school over other expenditure. Especially with the increased cost of living, you need more to be able to live a normal life. I spoke to my GP and they referred me to the local food bank. We used the food bank 3 or 4 times that year and if that support hadn't been in place, we wouldn't have been able to get through the hardship we faced."

If you had to make the decision to heat your home, buy food, or pay for fuel, which one would you go without and why?

JOHN'S STORY

When John left care, he had no support and became homeless. Unable to afford essentials such as food and shelter, he had no option but to use a food bank. Since then, he has started volunteering for his local food bank and has become a trustee.

“When I was homeless, food banks saved me. They provided me with food, shower gels and other necessities I couldn’t afford. But it also gave me somewhere to go for a chat or to see someone. The kindness I was shown there has stuck with me.”

Think about a time when you were shown kindness and how it impacted you. How could you take that experience of kindness into your home life, work life and community?



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HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS FACE HUNGER.

We live in one of the wealthiest countries in the world, and yet one in six people face hunger across Northern Ireland because they simply do not have enough money for the essentials we all need to get by.

How many people in Northern Ireland are cutting back on food or skipping meals entirely because they don't have enough income?

- a) 459,320
- b) 122,658
- c) 354,000

Answer: c) 354,000

CHILDREN IN NORTHERN IRELAND ARE FACING HUNGER.

Between 1 April 2022 to 31 March 2023, food banks in the Trussell Trust network in Northern Ireland distributed 81,084 emergency food parcels.

How many of these went to children?

- a) 18,923
- b) 12,749
- c) 35,334

CERTAIN GROUPS OF PEOPLE ARE MORE LIKELY TO FACE HUNGER THAN OTHERS.

Who is more likely to face hunger?

- a) Disabled people
- b) Families with children and single parents
- c) Carers
- d) People from ethnic minority groups
- e) LGBTQ+ people
- f) People who spent time in care as a child
- g) People who have had a recent adverse life experience.

Answer: All of the above. Hunger cuts across a range of backgrounds and experiences, affecting certain communities more than others.

WORK DOES NOT ALWAYS PROTECT PEOPLE FROM NEEDING A FOOD BANK.

Our social security system is the driving factor in pushing people towards hunger. Our research finds that this system, which we expect to support us in hard times, is failing to protect so many of us.

This is compounded by too many jobs being inaccessible, unstable and not paying enough to cover essential costs.

How many people forced to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network are in a working household?

- a) 1 in 8
- b) 1 in 3
- c) 1 in 5

Answer: c) 1 in 5

PROVIDING MORE THAN EMERGENCY FOOD.

People need food banks when they don't have enough money for essentials. That's why we work with communities across the UK to change the things that push people to need a food bank in the first place.

What other practical support do food banks in our network provide to reduce the need for emergency food in their communities?

- a) Help navigating the social security system
- b) Compassionate financial advice and support
- c) Signposting to other essential services to address the underlying cause of people's hardship

Answer: All of the above



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A LAST RESORT.

For most people at food banks, seeking emergency food support is a last resort. They are likely to have run down savings, exhausted options from family and friends, accumulated debt and experienced a decline in physical and mental health.

Having no money can also lead to social isolation and loneliness. One in four people referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network are experiencing severe social isolation and have contact with relatives, friends or neighbours less than once a month, if at all.

Imagine what it would be like not to have any friends or family to turn to in one of your toughest moments.

A CUP OF TEA AND A FRIENDLY FACE.

When someone comes to a food bank in the Trussell Trust network they are welcomed with a cup of tea.

Think about a time when sitting down and having a cup of tea with someone changed something for you.

Perhaps you were worried about something and you needed to chat to someone? Maybe you received much needed support or built an unexpected connection? Or perhaps you have experienced the welcome that food banks offer anyone who visits?

WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO FACE FINANCIAL HARDSHIP.

We know that hunger in the UK isn't about food. It's about a lack of income. That's why our food banks provide practical support that goes beyond emergency food.

Imagine how it could feel to face financial hardship and not have enough to afford the essentials you need to eat, keep warm, stay dry and clean. Maybe this is something you are experiencing or have experienced before.

WORKING TOWARDS A MORE JUST FUTURE.

At the Trussell Trust, we work with communities across the UK to change the things that push people to need a food bank.

What do you think needs to change so that all of us have enough money for the essentials, and no one needs to use a food bank in the future?

NO ONE IN NORTHERN IRELAND SHOULD FACE HUNGER.

It's not right that more and more people have no option but to turn to a food bank.

But there is hope.

We know what's pushing people to need food banks, so we know what needs to change: we need a social security system that provides protection and gives people the dignity of affording essentials, such as food and bills.

Help us end hunger in the UK.

trusselltrust.org/guarantee-our-essentials