



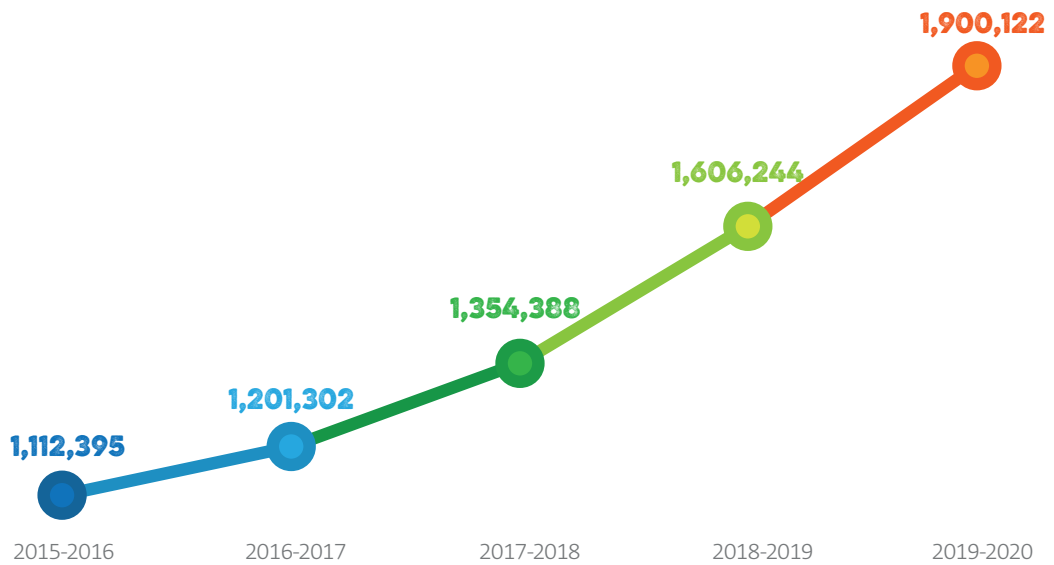
## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# LOCKDOWN, LIFELINES AND THE LONG HAUL AHEAD:

The impact of Covid-19 on food banks  
in the Trussell Trust network

# 1.

Well before Covid-19 hit the UK, food banks in the Trussell Trust network had been seeing year-on-year increases in levels of need, with 1.9 million emergency food parcels given out in 2019/20. Previous research has found that the overwhelming majority of people using food banks in the Trussell Trust network are destitute and, even before the pandemic, the number of people struggling to make ends meet was increasing. This crisis has landed after years of stagnant wages and frozen, capped working age benefits - leaving those on the lowest incomes vulnerable to income shocks.



# 2.

As Covid-19 hit the UK, the Trussell Trust saw an immediate and sustained surge in need across its food banks. In April there was an 89% increase in the number of emergency food parcels given out compared with the same month in 2019. This included a 107% increase in the number of parcels given to children, compared to the same period last year. The latest data shows that for the second quarter of 2020 need remained much higher than normal. New findings also show that almost 100,000 households received support from a food bank in the Trussell Trust network for the very first time between April and June.



at least  
**81%**  
increase in need across Q2

3.

Food banks showed extraordinary resilience in meeting this need given the challenging operational environment they were facing. There has also been an increase in the provision of emergency food by charities and other organisations across the UK – illustrating the incredible national response at this time of crisis.

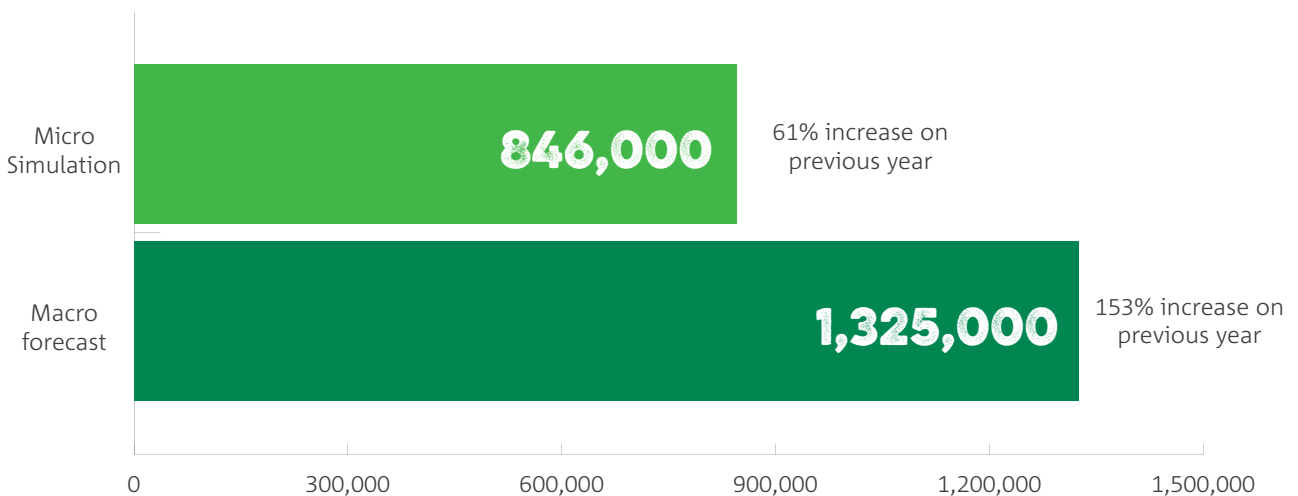


4.

At the start of the pandemic, the Trussell Trust commissioned work to understand the likely levels of need food banks in the network would be likely to see as the economic impact of Covid-19 unfolded. This modelling has been carried out by Heriot-Watt University, in partnership with the National Institute for Economic and Social Research. Two different approaches have been taken – one based on forecasts at the macro-economic level, and one based on a microsimulation model based on changes to household employment status and income levels.

5.

The findings show that there is likely to be a significant rise in levels of destitution in the UK by the end of the year, and at least an extra 300,000 emergency food parcels are likely to be distributed by food banks in the Trussell Trust network in the last quarter of 2020 – an increase of 61% compared to the previous year. The modelling shows that – depending on factors like the strength of the economy and a second wave of Covid-19 – levels of need could be even higher.



6.

Many of the measures the UK Government has taken will have protected large numbers of people from being swept into financial hardship and destitution. New findings set out in this report indicate that removing the current temporary increase in the Universal Credit standard allowance rate could increase use of food banks in the Trussell Trust network by almost 10%.



£20

the £20 increase is helping  
to protect people

7.

Despite the Government's action, there has been a sustained increase in the number of people needing to turn to food banks in the Trussell Trust network and other forms of support as they cannot afford the essentials that we all rely on – and the new projections show that a storm lies ahead.

8.

We have a vital opportunity as we rebuild to shape the society we want to live in, and to ensure that the safety net we all want to be there for one another is as strong as possible. As a priority, we are calling for the Government to:

**Protect people's incomes by locking in the £20 uplift to Universal Credit**

**Help people hold on to more of their benefits by suspending benefit debt deductions until a fairer approach to repayments can be introduced**

**Make local safety nets as strong as possible by investing £250m in local welfare assistance in England every year**

We also urge the Government to rethink the impending cliff edge of the Job Retention Scheme coming to an end.

9.

Food banks in our network have responded incredibly to this national crisis, as have countless other organisations. We want to see an end to the need for food banks in the UK by tackling the issues that drive people into destitution and needing crisis support. We urge the Government to lead the way.



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