

# **Trussell Trust reveal increased demand for food banks**

**The Trussell Trust has published figures today showing that 128,490 emergency food parcels were provided to people in Scotland between April and September by food banks in the charity's network.**

This is the highest number of food parcels that the network has ever distributed at this point in the year and is a 9% increase on the same period in 2022.

Low incomes, especially as a result of reliance on social security, debt, health conditions, and issues with social security payments such as delays or sanctions were the main reasons that people had no option but to turn to a food bank for help.

A record 41,878 food parcels were provided for 21,000 children living in families who could not afford the essentials. This shows a 4% increase compared to the same period last year, and demonstrates the continuing rise in need for the support provided by food banks.

The new data also revealed that 59% of all the parcels provided by food banks in the Trussell Trust network between April and September this year were for families with children.

The charity has reported that 26,038 people have had to use a food bank for the first time during the past six months. The Trussell Trust said that food banks are at 'breaking point' as more and more people in Scotland find themselves unable to afford the basics.

The charity said that it believes the situation is unlikely to change in the coming months with this stark new data leading them to forecast that food banks in their network will distribute more than a million emergency food parcels in the UK between December 2023 and February 2024 the equivalent of providing a parcel every eight seconds this winter.

**Fiona Dalgleish, Manager at Peeblesshire food bank, said:** "We are dreading the winter to be honest. Last year was bad enough, but people are now completely exhausted and demoralised on top of being cold and hungry. We are feeling pretty helpless – we can provide food, but we need some hope. There needs to be a light at the end of the tunnel for people."

This situation is likely to keep getting worse, unless the Scottish Government invests further in policies proven to help people buy food and other essentials, while working towards a long term goal of a Scotland where no one needs to use a food bank. The Scottish Government has announced a new policy of Cash First

**Polly Jones, Head of the Trussell Trust in Scotland, said:** "It is alarming that an increasing number of children in Scotland are growing up in families facing hunger, forced to turn to food banks to survive. A generation is growing up believing that it's normal to see a food bank in every community. This is not right.

"Rising hunger and hardship have devastating consequences for individuals and our communities, damage the nation's health and hold back our economy. People in work, as well as people

who cannot work, are increasingly being pushed into debt and forced to turn to a food bank to survive.

“Despite this, there are some positives in Scotland. The Trussell Trust recently welcomed the Scottish Government’s support for an Essentials Guarantee, the publication of its plan, Cash First: Towards Ending the need for food banks, and the launch of its Cash First Fund. These are significant steps towards a future where no one needs to use a food bank. However, at a time when need for emergency support is greater than ever, the scale of the hunger and hardship faced by thousands in Scotland must be met with significantly scaled up action this winter and beyond.

“We are also calling on the UK Government to urgently confirm in the Autumn Statement that benefits will rise in line with inflation next April, and to reduce the burden of debt deductions which drive unacceptable levels of hardship.”

The Trussell Trust is encouraging people to show their support for people facing hardship by signing a petition urging UK political party leaders to support the introduction of an Essentials Guarantee to ensure that the basic rate of University Credit at least covers life’s essentials, such as food and bills. You can find out more here: [Guarantee our essentials – The Trussell Trust](#)

The government’s Cash First Fund was announced by Ms Somerville earlier in the year and the first round of funding closed at the beginning of September. This Fund is to end the need for food banks by improving access to emergency financial assistance as the “first port of call in a crisis”.

The government said that it was a more proactive approach: “Providing money advice and holistic support services alongside cash-first responses can help to prevent future hardship. Taken together, these actions can help to maintain dignity for those experiencing hardship by enabling them to

have choice over how to access the food and other essentials they need, and can start to reduce the need for emergency food parcels”

The two year project will fund eight local partnerships in Scotland with up to £200,000 each to improve urgent access to cash and to generate evidence to share and shape future policy.

Scotland is the first nation in the UK to publish a [plan towards ending the need for food banks](#).

A Department for Work and Pensions spokesperson said:“There are 1.7 million fewer people in absolute poverty than in 2010, but we know some families are struggling, which is why we are providing a record support package worth £3,300 per household. This includes the latest cost of living payments paid directly to over eight million households this month and our decision to raise benefits by over 10% earlier this year.

“We also know that households are at least £6,000 a year better off in full-time work than out of work on benefits, and to help people out of poverty through work we are also increasing the National Living Wage again and investing £3.5 billion to help thousands into jobs, grow the economy and bear down on inflation.”