

SPRING 2023 ISSUE:

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LATEST NEWS

- On 27th February the Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation launched a joint campaign “Guarantee our Essentials” which aims to persuade the government to overhaul the benefits system so that everybody in the country, regardless of their personal circumstances, has enough money to afford to live in comfort and dignity. The campaign is explained in more detail later in this briefing.
- Before Christmas we were pleased to welcome Clive Lewis MP (Norwich South, Labour) and Alice Macdonald (Norwich North, prospective Labour Party candidate) to the food bank . They were both very interested to hear about the work we do and asked a number of searching questions regarding the main drivers behind food poverty in our area. It is good to know that our local representatives have such a clear understanding of what needs to be done to improve both the benefits system and the availability of timely local interventions. We always welcome all visitors from any political party or organisation who wish to learn more about what we do.
- Having established advisers from our partner agencies, Citizens Advice and Shelter, to offer signposting to our clients in our distribution centres, we are now looking carefully at how we might expand this service to potential clients at other venues. We currently provide this service at St Catherine’s Church at Milecross where we try to help people *before* they find themselves in destitution and needing a food parcel. We enjoy tremendous support from Brian Garner who is our main contact with the church, as well as the Reverend Martin Hartley and his wonderful ministry team. Various options are being examined including recruiting volunteers to work in other churches and schools to engage with those who are in need of assistance. We are not able to offer advice as such, but can ‘signpost’ our clients to relevant referral partners. If you would like to be involved with chatting to people and helping them to explore options, please contact Iain Turner, the Pathfinder Project Officer on iain@norwich.foodbank.org.uk .
- We are all only too aware of the current financial crisis, and the way in which it has caused much tightening of belts, especially around the spiralling cost of fuel and heating. It is interesting to note that this is reflected in the number of fuel vouchers we have issued recently. In February alone we helped 31 households with **£1,089** worth of fuel vouchers. With fuel costs projected to rise yet again in April, it looks as if this is going to be an area in which we will continue to be heavily involved, and we are always grateful to receive financial donations, as well as food, which we can use to help people manage their bills.

2022 STATS

Although our numbers for the year January 1st to December 31st 2022 will rise slightly as the odd paper voucher or two come in late, we can be confident that the following information is representative of the year's final figures. Those figures show a sharp increase in the number of people who come to us for help—even compared to 2020 when we were in lockdown. Sadly, as has often been the case before, many of those affected are children.

- In December 2022 we fed 1208 people (an increase of 16% on November and a 19% increase on December 2020.) 466 (39%) of those fed were children.
- Between October and December 2022 we fed 3164 people (an increase of 11% on the previous three months.) 1190 (38%) of those fed were children.
- In 2022 we fed 9955 people (an increase of 4% on 2021.) 3696 of those fed (37%) were children.

It is deeply worrying that nearly 10,000 people found themselves in a position to need our food bank .

The fact that nearly 3,700 of them were children is both shameful and unacceptable.

At the Norwich Foodbank, in keeping with all of our colleagues at the Trussell Trust, we will keep campaigning for an end to the need for food banks. Everyone should be able to afford the essentials in life, like food and, as a Pathfinder Foodbank, we are committed to campaigning both locally and nationally for government policy to be changed to make this possible. We also strive to give those who are unheard a voice and to help them in their struggle.

If you would like to know more about our work and how you can help, please email the Pathfinder Project Officer, Iain Turner at iain@norwich.foodbank.org.uk .

ELECTIONS MAY 2023 (DISTRICT, CITY, TOWN, PARISH COUNCILS)

On Thursday 4th May there will be elections across our area with candidates from different parties standing for District, City, Town and Parish councils. As you will be aware, as a charity we are not permitted to (nor would we wish to) voice our support for an individual candidate, party or organisation.

That is not to say that we cannot influence the way in which policy is created and executed, and to this end, as we did last May, we shall be compiling statistics for each city ward and for the District Councils within our area. We will publish these along with the names and contact details (where given) of the candidates so that those who wish to are able to make their views known and question them as to their intentions should they be successful in the election.

By making contact with candidates, we hope that our supporters will put the plight of our clients at the top of any ongoing campaign so that, no matter what political agenda a candidate has, they are left in no doubt as to the strength of feeling regarding issues such as Universal Credit, cost of living, fuel costs and being able to afford the essentials amongst their potential voters.

The Norwich Foodbank family has a powerful voice and, when joined by our colleagues across the nation, we can, and must, make a difference to the way the least fortunate members of our society are cared for.

More information will follow nearer the time.



On 27th February the Trussell Trust and the Joseph Rowntree Foundation launched a joint campaign after research revealed that basic benefits are at least £140 a month below the real cost of food, energy and everyday basics.

Both organisations are calling for the government to formally bring Universal Credit rates into line with minimum living costs.

The two charities have calculated the cost of a basic existence to be £120 a week for a single adult and £200 for a couple. This calculation is based on a 'basket' of food, energy, travel, mobile phone, internet and includes toiletries, sanitary products, cleaning materials and so on.

Even after the proposed 10.1% benefits uprating in April, the Universal Credit standard allowance of £85 per week for a single adult (£35 below the calculated minimum) and £134 for a couple (£66 below the calculated minimum), the *buying* power of benefits will fall to a 40 year low.

In reality more than half of households on Universal Credit receive even less than that basic amount because of caps and deductions. A single adult could, typically, see their benefits reduced to £64 per week. More than 45% of those receiving Universal Credit using food banks are in debt...to the government.

Trussell Trust chief executive, Emma Revie has said that, even when food banks have helped clients with advice and benefit checks, their newly enhanced income is often *still* not enough to pay their bills.

"People have cut and cut, but you cannot budget if your budget is not enough."

Recent polling shows that nearly three quarters of the public believe that Universal Credit rates are too low and there is a majority who support raising the level to a workable minimum. This majority includes 62% of those who voted for a Conservative government in 2019.

The Trussell Trust and Joseph Rowntree Foundation are calling on the government to enshrine in law the principle that benefits should be aligned with a robust, *independent* estimate of basic living costs. The current setting of benefit levels is primarily a political exercise and is out of touch with the reality of the lives of those who need help.

How you can help:

- If you would like to lend your voice to the campaign please click [here](#) to visit the Trussell Trust's dedicated campaign page.
- To read the campaign launch article please click [here](#).
- To visit the Joseph Rowntree Foundation research and campaign page please click [here](#).
- If you would like more information about contacting your local representative click [here](#).
- For a selection of publicity materials to use locally, please click [here](#).

Thank you for your continued prayers and support.