

PRESS RELEASE

UNDER STRICT EMBARGO UNTIL 00.01AM ON 25 APRIL 2019

Record 1.6 million food bank parcels given to people in past year as the Trussell Trust calls for end to Universal Credit five week wait

Number of food parcels given out across the UK soars 73% in five years*

New data released today shows April 2018 to March 2019 to be the busiest year for food banks in the Trussell Trust's network since the charity opened. During the past year, 1,583,668 three-day emergency food supplies were given to people in crisis in the UK; More than half a million of these (577,618) went to children. This is an 18.8% increase on the previous year.

The main reasons for people needing emergency food are benefits consistently not covering the cost of living (33%), and delays or changes to benefits being paid.**

Universal Credit is not the only benefit payment people referred to food banks have experienced problems with, but issues with moving onto the new system are a key driver of increasing need. Almost half (49%) of food bank referrals made due to a delay in benefits being paid in UK were linked to Universal Credit.***

From this data, and [other insights](#) from food banks in the Trussell Trust's network, the charity believes ending the five week for a first Universal Credit payment should be the Government's first priority to help create a future without food banks.

The Trussell Trust's chief executive Emma Revie said:

"What we are seeing year-upon-year is more and more people struggling to eat because they simply cannot afford food. This is not right.

"Enough is enough. We know this situation can be fixed - that's why we're campaigning to create a future where no one needs a food bank. Our benefits system is supposed to protect us all from being swept into poverty. Universal Credit should be part of the solution but currently the five week wait is leaving many without enough money to cover the basics. As a priority, we're urging the government to end the wait for Universal Credit to ease the pressure on thousands of households.

"Ultimately, it's unacceptable that anyone should have to use a food bank in the first place. No charity can replace the dignity of having financial security. That's why in the long-term, we're urging the Government to ensure benefit payments reflect the true cost of living and work is secure, paying the real Living Wage, to help ensure we are all anchored from poverty."

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