

Written evidence submitted by The Trussell Trust (COV0153)

2nd June 2020

Dear Neil,

I am writing to thank you for inviting me to give evidence to your Committee on behalf of the Trussell Trust on 15th May 2020. I very much enjoyed the session and appreciated the opportunity to provide further information about our work and discuss the evidence and experiences of our UK-wide network of food banks.

I would also like to thank you for writing to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to highlight our proposals for a temporary Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme and to ask how the Government is responding to the need for emergency food aid.

During the session, I mentioned that in June, the Trussell Trust would be releasing figures for the number of people who had turned to our food banks in April. These will be published tomorrow and I would like to share these with you in advance. Our figures show **an 89% increase in the number of people turning to our food banks in April across the UK**, compared to the same time last year. This represents a further increase from our previous figures, which showed **an 81% rise in need in the last two weeks of March**, compared to the same time last year. Please find attached our embargoed press release for further information.

As I explained during the evidence session, our figures for March highlighted how fragile the safety net can be for many people. We have welcomed the government's initial response to the crisis, including the implementation of the Jobs Retention Scheme, Self-employed income support scheme, and boosts to Universal Credit. As your letter to the Secretary of State reflects, we set out a package of measures in the form of a Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme which we believe is essential to support people who have fallen through the gaps of the government's response so far.

Our latest figures show that, while welcome, the changes that have been made since March to increase the financial support available to people have simply not been enough to protect many from being swept into crisis. Despite the introduction of these measures, food banks in the Trussell Trust network have seen the huge increases in need from March continue through April, and even worsen. This is made all the more concerning by the planned phasing out of the government's signature policy responses to the economic crisis, in the form of the Jobs Retention Scheme and the Self-Employed Income support scheme.

You may recall at the session I discussed the vital role local welfare assistance schemes, operated by local authorities, can play in providing those being pulled under by immediate financial crises with rapid support. Alongside a coalition of anti-poverty charities, including the Independent Food Aid Network,

Child Poverty Action Group, the Children's Society, the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, StepChange and Turn2us, the Trussell Trust is calling on the government to make sure local authorities in England have enough funding to provide emergency cash grants so money can be put directly into people's pockets quickly. An increase in funding to local authorities in England would help bring the government response on this type of support closer to that of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. This should be one part of a wider package set out in our proposed Coronavirus Emergency Income Support Scheme and reflects our belief that a cash-first rather than a food-first approach is the best response to financial hardship and the need for food banks.

I promised the Committee I would write to you once again with additional details on these proposals, so please find attached a briefing setting out our joint position and the case for increasing this funding by £250 million to meet immediate needs.

In the meantime, I look forward to continuing to work with you.

Yours sincerely,

Emma Revie
Chief Executive, The Trussell Trust