



IFAN SURVEY AUGUST 2024

The [Independent Food Aid Network \(IFAN\)](#) collated data from frontline member food aid organisations including 149 independent food banks operating across England, Scotland, and Wales in August 2024. The survey found:

- **Nearly 69% of organisations responding to the survey had seen increases in need comparing April 2024 – July 2024 with the same four-month period last year**
- **Local authorities and NHS services were the agencies most likely to refer people unable to afford food to food banks**
- **Nearly 75% of contributing organisations supported people who had been referred or signposted by DWP Jobcentres**
- **All contributing organisations reported supporting people who had not needed help before**
- **Three quarters of organisations supported people needing regular help and nearly half were supporting an increased number of people facing extreme hardship**
- **Nearly 80% of services had seen a drop in food donations while nearly half of the organisations contributing to the survey had seen a drop in financial donations**
- **Nearly all of the contributing organisations had purchased food to make up for depleted food donations**
- **If demand were to increase, more than half of contributing organisations said they would need to reduce the size of the food parcels they provided or might not be able to help everyone who asked for support**

As [IFAN wrote to the Prime Minister on the 5th of July](#), the new Government has a once in a generation opportunity to reverse the tide of poverty that has swept the country over the past fourteen years

IFAN is calling for immediate, cash first actions to reduce severe food insecurity:

- adoption of [an Essentials Guarantee](#) as a first step towards ensuring a [Living Income](#) for all
- removal of the two-child limit as well as the benefit cap
- abolition of the sanctions' regime

- removal of the five-week wait for Universal Credit and any benefit deductions
- removal of No Recourse to Public Funds status
- permanent provision of local crisis support funding in England (beyond March 2026) alongside an increase in Local Housing Allowance
- real Living Wages and job security for all
- long-term investment in local advice services
- commencement of section 1 of the Equality Act

Background:

- The [Independent Food Aid Network \(IFAN\)](#) supports and advocates on behalf of charitable food aid providers operating across the UK including hundreds of independent food banks. IFAN's vision is of a country without the need for charitable food aid where adequate and nutritious food is affordable to all.
- A total of 80 organisations running 155 venues, including 74 independent food banks running 149 venues, responded to IFAN's August 2024 survey between the 8th and the 15th of August 2024. Questions related to April to July 2024 as compared to April to July 2023. You can access all of [IFAN's recent surveys](#).
- IFAN has identified at least 1,172 independent food banks operating across the UK including those run by multiple faith groups in addition to over 1,300 Trussell Trust food banks as well as hundreds of food banks run by schools, universities, hospitals, and the Salvation Army. There are also thousands of other charitable food aid providers including food pantries, social supermarkets, and soup kitchens.
- IFAN's director, Sabine Goodwin, recently wrote [this opinion piece](#) for the Big Issue linked to [Trussell's most recent mid-year stats](#) and wider severe food insecurity. According to the most recent [Department for Work and Pensions' \(DWP\) Family Resources Survey \(FRS\)](#) 86% of households reporting severe food insecurity did not access a food bank.
- IFAN is calling for a cash first approach to food insecurity and has co-produced ['Worrying About Money?' cash first referral leaflets](#) in over 130 local authorities in Scotland, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland. These resources help people struggling to afford food and support workers to find local advice and cash first support to maximise income and reduce the need for charitable food aid .
- The DWP's FRS has also found that in the year before the onset of the pandemic, 43% of UK households on Universal Credit were food insecure. Thanks to the £20 weekly increase to Universal Credit, there was a 16% reduction in severe and moderate food insecurity levels for those households relying on this benefit, but the uplift was removed in October 2021.

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Breakdown of IFAN Survey – August 2024

Table 1 - How 74 food aid providers running 149 independent food banks operated. Participants could choose all options that applied.

Operation	No of organisations
Run a food bank or other food parcel distributor	74
Run advice services alongside food support	32
Distribute shopping vouchers/cards/energy vouchers alongside or instead of food parcels	28
Run a food pantry	15
Other	12
Run another kind of food aid service	8

Table 2 - How people unable to afford food accessed services of 74 food aid providers operating 149 independent food banks

Access to service	No of organisations
Referral and self-referral	41
Referral only	18
Self-referral only / no records of referrals from outside agencies	15

Table 3 - Agencies referring people to food aid providers as reported by 59 organisations operating 128 independent food banks. Participants could choose all options that applied.

Referral agencies	No of organisations
Local authority teams (social services, housing, welfare/benefits advice etc.)	58
NHS services (GP surgeries, health visitors, hospitals etc.)	55
Advice agencies (including Citizens Advice)	53
Third sector (mental health support agencies, agencies supporting people with NRPF, etc.)	52
Schools	51
Other	17

Table 4 - 71 organisations running 146 independent food banks reported on whether Jobcentres have been referring or signposting clients to their services. Participants could choose all options that applied. (This follows [the DWP announcement that Jobcentres should only ever signpost clients to food banks](#)).

Jobcentres signposted/referred	No of organisations
Signposted clients to our services	38
Not signposted or referred clients to our services	19
Officially referred clients to our services	15

Table 5 - Levels of need in April – July 2024 compared to April – July 2023 as reported by 74 organisations operating 149 independent food banks.

Levels of need	No of organisations
We've seen a slight increase (up to 25% increase)	37
We've seen a significant increase (up to 50% increase)	13
We've seen a slight decrease (up to 25% decrease)	12
Stayed the same	9
Other	2
We've seen an extremely significant increase (over 50% increase)	1
We've seen a significant decrease (up to 50% decrease)	0
We've seen an extremely significant decrease (over 50% decrease)	0

Table 6 – Reasons behind increases in need in April – July 2024 as reported by 51 organisations operating 116 independent food banks. Organisations could report any number of reasons.

Reasons for use	No of organisations
Increases in the cost of living	49
Housing problems	35

Universal Credit wait times	30
Inadequate wages	30
Insecure work	30
Benefit deductions	29
Family breakdown	29
Sanctions	27
Low Social Security payments	22
No Recourse to Public Funds (NRPF)	22
Two-child limit	14
Benefit cap	13
Disability related costs	10
Transport costs	9
Other	3
Not sure	2

Table 7 – Whether organisations had supported people who have not needed support before in April – July 2024 as reported by 74 organisations operating 149 independent food banks.

Supported people who had not needed help before	No of organisations
Yes	74

No	0
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Table 8 - Whether there'd been an increase in the number of people needing regular support in April – July 2024 as compared to April – July 2023 as reported by 72 organisations operating 144 independent food banks.

Seeing more people needing regular support	No or organisations
Yes	54
No	18

Table 9 - 69 organisations operating 142 independent food banks reported on whether there was an increase in the number of people accessing their services experiencing extreme hardship in April – July 2024 when compared with April – July 2023.

Seeing more people experiencing extreme hardship	No of organisation
No	40
Yes	29

Table 10 - 74 organisations operating 149 independent food banks reported access to resources in relation to the support they could provide in April – July 2024.

Access to resources/ability to support people	No of organisation
No, we have been able to support everyone	33
Yes, but we are managing to operate as per usual	31

Yes, we've needed to reduce the level of support we provide	10
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Table 11 - 72 organisations operating 147 independent food banks reported on food donation levels in April – July 2024.

Food donation levels	No of organisation
Donations levels have dropped	56
Donation levels have stayed the same	14
Donation levels have increased	2

Table 12 - 71 organisations operating 146 independent food banks reported on financial donation levels in April to July 2024.

Financial donation levels	No of organisation
Donation levels have dropped	34
Donation levels have stayed the same	32
Donation levels have increased	5

Table 13 - 67 organisations operating 142 independent food banks reported on access to surplus food in April – July 2024.

Experienced difficulties accessing surplus food	No of organisation
No	35
Yes	32

Table 14 - 67 organisations operating 142 independent food banks reported on the quality of surplus food in April – July 2024.

Experienced issues with the quality of surplus food	No of organisation
No	39
Yes	28

Table 15 - 73 organisations operating 148 independent food banks reporting on the organisations need to purchase food to supplement for donations in April – July 2024.

Have you purchased food?	No of organisation
Yes, a broad range	53
Yes, particular items	17
No, we have not	3

Table 16 - 74 organisations operating 149 independent food banks reported on volunteer numbers in April to July 2024.

Volunteer numbers	No of organisation
Have stayed the same	46
Have increased	17
Have dropped	11

Table 17 - Concerns about capacity to provide support if need continues to increase as reported by 74 organisations operating 149 independent food banks.

Level of concern about capacity to provide support	No of organisation
No - confident about being able to access supply to meet demand	34
Yes - may need to reduce parcel size/voucher support	20
Yes - may not be able to support everyone seeking our help	20