

Appendix – some anecdotes re food security

I spoke to the housing officers they said that they had comments from a lot of people who would not dream of ever asking for food even though they are desperate. They said things like they would never go to a food bank, they would always rely on friends for food. One person said that they would 'prefer to shoplift than go to a food bank'.

On the question about why do people use food banks they said that they were in such a dire financial straits that they had no option and that the foodbank was their only lifeline between eating and going hungry.

Please see the response from another food bank worker

Mother 22 years with a baby of 23 months

I received benefit sanctions and had very difficult family circumstances. 'I burst into tears when I visited the food bank, the volunteers were so kind to me, I was overcome

I 've had had a really rough couple of years and it seemed that no one would help me. I can't believe the support I've received-not just with food -though I don't want to admit that I was desperate -I had nothing-but the way volunteers listened to my problems ,they have helped me in so many ways. It's good to be able to go along to the community café and talk to people . I live on a really rough street I'm scared of my daughter playing outside with the other children- I don't let her go out so we are stuck inside it was very difficult with no food, no nothing- I was very isolated. I have made some friends at the food bank, I cried when one of the mothers from the food bank rang me to see how I was doing. I have offered to do some volunteering at the food bank as I want to pay back the support they gave to me.

Full time working mother 39 years with 4 children

I am so grateful for the support the food bank gave me. It helped me to focus on my daughter who was hospitalised due to serious mental health issues. At the same time my tax credits got mixed up although I had filled the form in correctly. This has happened a number of times and it is so difficult to sort it out. The food gave me time to support my daughter who I was with in the evenings. It took away the constant worry of debt and having to get to the shops. It was terrible I didn't know how we were going to survive. The people at the food bank helped me to sort out some of my financial issues and to sort out my tax credits.

60 year old man-

benefit sanctions/mix up delay in payments.' I couldn't believe that after 40 years of working I ended up needing to attend a food bank ...its horrific to be in this position, I have worked all my life . I was ill and on a very low income. I got food from the food bank to see me through a very difficult time. I lost my benefits I had no money I didn't know what to do I had no friends or family I felt totally isolated and was completely lost.The people at the food bank helped me to get my benefits sorted out .I still go to the community café at the food bank to meet people as I am very lonely.

Man late 40's

Changes to the disability benefit and withdrawal of mobility support. He has a number of serious health issues .he is worse off by over £200's per month due to changes in benefits. The withdrawal of the mobility allowance is particularly cruel. He had ,had the benefit for over 5 years and this has had a major impact on his life. He is finding it very difficult to adapt to the changes. His brother brought him to the food bank as no one else was prepared to support him, it was the last chance saloon. The food he received has definitely helped him through a very difficult period of his life. He says food is the last thing I buy I pay my bills first. The food has also allowed him to have his son (primary age)- my biggest fear was that I didn't have any food to feed him. I am very depressed and feel isolated I know that I am withdrawing from society. I just cant cope especially since my mobility allowance has been stopped, it was my lifeline.

I am hoping that I can get better maybe I can help out at the food bank in the future.

Single mother 30 years old 2 school age children, domestic abuse

Food was provided whilst the benefits were being re assessed due to the father leaving the marital home.

Mother addresses physical ,emotional and financial abuse she had been suffering from. Not easy very complex abuse going on for many years – dealing with school, social services-police,hospital as well as supporting children through a very difficult break up and losing the children's dad. Complex processes for financial help and support ...not easy loss of financial support from father , life became very difficult. Where do you go to for support ?we became so isolated. The only people that helped us were the people at the food bank.

For information re this particular food bank 3 out of the 11 referrals they have dealt with suggest domestic abuse and financial abuse- withdrawal of money and payments by partners .Issue re women in relationships being able to access joint money /bank accounts...very difficult if the man decides to block access.

I hope some of this info helps. I know there are loads of desperate stories out there...people just don't want to talk about it. They are scared and very isolated which heightens the feeling of being alone with huge problems. People have to be really without hope to seek the help and support from a food bank. The community in Wythenshawe is very proud (like everywhere else I suspect). They would be mortified and totally ashamed at the thought of using a food bank.

They are focussed on themselves and their issues they do not think about policy or the government. They seem to accept benefit delays and sanctions as something that happens, they are angry but feel helpless to challenge.

I feel utterly depressed myself when I think about the swingeing benefit cuts that are planned to take place over the next few months ... they just mean more and more people and children living in abject poverty being forced into the margins of societyno hope and no future when you can't even feed your kids.