

# Focus on Foodbanks in Kent

## Working together to reduce the need for Foodbanks in Kent

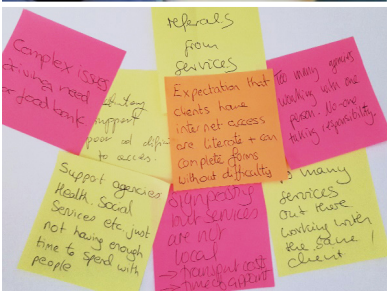


In April, we brought together Foodbanks from across Kent for the first time.

Seven Foodbanks joined us to explore how they could work better together and to discuss the issues and challenges that they both face.

All Foodbanks talked about the steady increase in clients visiting them and how vital volunteers are in ensuring the service continues. Foodbanks also reported that they felt the local community were becoming more sympathetic towards their needs and offer greater donations particularly around Christmas and Harvest Festival.

All the groups agreed that the people using foodbanks are facing multiple issues and challenges not just food poverty. Everyone agreed that they wanted to work collaboratively together to tackle some of these issues.



## What challenges are people facing?

There is a lack of understanding of Food Poverty by the general public. Foodbanks in Kent are frustrated that the massive increase in use of foodbanks has not been linked to increases in poverty across Kent.

Foodbanks would like to unite and engage with KCC to explore the issues with local government.

Foodbanks reported a sharp rise in the number of clients who felt 'no-one is helping me' and who were trying to deal with issues without statutory support.

Foodbanks would welcome a discussion with KCC about the impact on reduced face to face services and the knock on effect on clients and their service.

More people claim they are using Foodbanks because of changes around Universal Credit.

Foodbanks agreed to collate the evidence to show how the changes are impacting on the service and their clients.

The Trussell Trust will use this data to support their lobbying on this issue.

# Creating the first Kent Foodbank network

## Foodbanks felt that meeting together created a welcomed opportunity to;

- Share practices & experiences
- Exchange information, contacts & materials
- Compare & listen
- Network & connect

Everyone wanted to continue the conversations and come back together. There was a desire to work collectively with each other and Healthwatch Kent to raise some of the issues that their clients are facing. Although many of them are already doing this at a local level, they all agreed they could affect more change by working together at a county level to inform service commissioning and have a positive influence on decision making.

## Objectives of the foodbank network were proposed:

- ▶ To provide valuable non-party political insights on the issues of food poverty
- ▶ To reduce the need for Foodbanks across Kent
- ▶ To raise awareness of Food Poverty and the associated issues affecting individuals and families.

## Next steps

To widen the network to reach all Foodbanks across Kent as no area is immune from Food Poverty.

Healthwatch Kent's parent company, Engaging Kent. Have offered to fund and facilitate another meeting in East Kent on September 12<sup>th</sup> from 10am - 1pm in Canterbury.

**To book your place please contact Nicky on:**  
**nicky@engagekent.co.uk**

## Ideas exchange

It is worth looking to big companies who have an interest in Community Social Responsibility (CSR), this has worked when we need some 'muscle' to move heavy food/donations.

We try and slip in books or toys if we know there are children in the household.

Could we advertise for volunteers through wider newsletter networks, for example in Healthwatch Kent newsletters?

Our Food bank members signed a thank you card for the local church who are our biggest donors

Tesco nationally offer donations in December, but this is when the public make large donations, could Trussell Trust make Tesco aware and ask if this could be moved to July?

If we hear its someone's birthday, we try and to put in small gifts or flowers that we have been given

We put up a social media request and within 12 hours there will be a positive response in the donation boxes in supermarkets

