

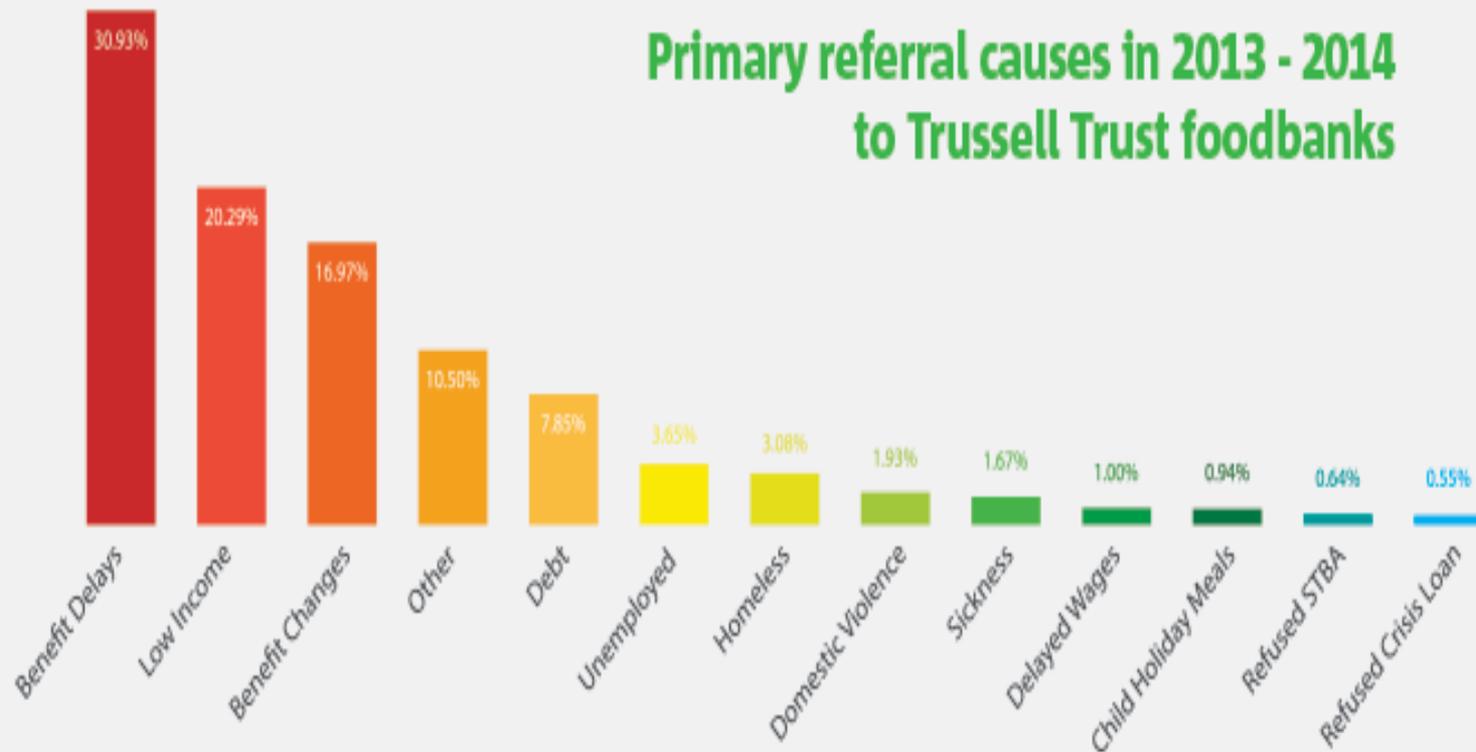
Living in areas of disadvantage in an age of austerity: what can we learn from those who use food banks?



Alice Sampson, School of Social Sciences, UEL
Myrto Tsilimpounidi, School of Social Sciences, UEL
Angie Voela, School of Social Sciences, UEL

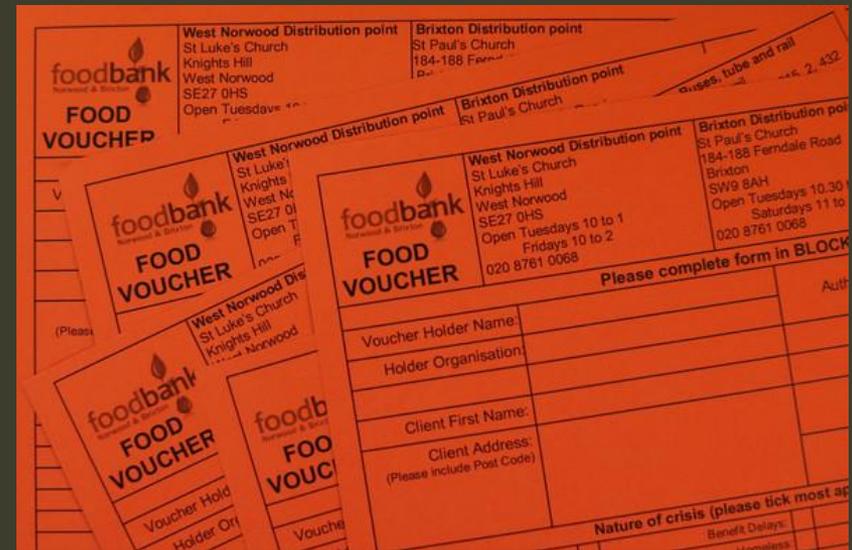
Reasons for using food banks

Primary referral causes in 2013 - 2014 to Trussell Trust foodbanks



Referrals and vouchers

- So the people are referred to us from Victim Support, from Job Centres Plus, from Social Services, Children, Adult Social Services, from the Mental Health Team at Goodmayes Hospital, Schools, Health Centres, Children's Centres, Probation Office... so they're already in the care of the authorities, do you see what I mean?
- The voucher ... has information to put in our records because if not, if I come out and say, 'I've served 100 people or x, y, z, amount of people, somebody can come and say, 'He's a liar.' The government can say I'm lying, ... [but] you can't deny it...



The precariousness of providing food

- Financially we need the support, there is a lot of paperwork... we've got 67 volunteers, so there's a lot of admin, we have to do training, we have to do Health & Safety... it all takes money.
- You've got to think on the storage as well, we are actually struggling with storage here ... the insurance and all that sort of thing...
- Most times I'm short of sugar, I'm short of milk, I'm short of juice and I'm short of tea. These four areas... I have quite a lot of pastas, quite a lot of cereals, quite a lot of baked beans... so the little fund I'm getting goes into buying.

Attitude to clients: dependency

- Like today, there are people here who depend only on the food bank. I have some people on immigration ... I have families of domestic violence.
- We don't want them to continually depending on us, that's one of the things we don't want, because immediately you do that... the abuse will be high, ok?
- But I suppose if anyone walks in and says, 'I'm hungry,' you would feed them...



Attitude to clients: 'this is not just about food'

It feels to me that this is the last step, to just say to some people, 'Well, you poor, marginalised subject – take some food.' But ... what would be the point? If it was just food, you're just giving them fishes, not a fishing rod.

We don't really give them just food, we also find out, 'What are you doing about it... are you receiving help, is something being done about it?'



So we try to be human...

- And we are not only interested in food, we are looking for long term, how they will sustain themselves and come out from this present situation.
- *So we try to be human*, we try to be flexible, so sometimes what I will do I will send them back again to social services or the Job Centre and say, 'OK now you know the rules, you know I can't support him for this long...
- ... every human being wants to be loved, to belong, to be accepted. If they come in, we give them food, [if] they go away without touching their heart it's no different between us and the social system. So ... they sit down, they talk with my volunteers.