

## **Southend Foodbank parcels provided to people in the past year**

**New figures released by Southend Foodbank today reveal 9,284 emergency food parcels were provided to local people who couldn't afford the essentials between April 2021 and March 2022 - 4,255 of these went to children.**

**This number of parcels is a 42% increase on 2019-20.**

The food bank believes the increase in people needing support is due to people trying to survive on incomes that don't cover the basics, with two-thirds of referrals citing low income as the reason for needing help from the foodbank. The safety measures put in place during the 2020 lockdown to ensure the financial security of many low-income families and individuals all disappeared in 2021: The removal of the non-means tested £20 per week uplift to Universal Credit, the removal of the moratorium on evictions for those with rent arrears, the ending of the furlough scheme and the huge increase in the energy price cap. These factors, combined with the re-starting of sanctions to those who do not comply implicitly with the Universal Credit system, plus the continuing 5-week wait for first payment from a new or amended Universal Credit claim have continued to make their presence felt, with the repayments of 'advances' re-starting in 2021 also.

**The food bank is part of the Trussell Trust network, which has experienced its busiest winter outside of the height of the pandemic in 2020.** Food banks in the Trussell Trust network provided more than 2.1 million parcels to people on the lowest incomes across the UK from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2022. This is a 14% increase on pre-pandemic figures in 2019-20 as more and more people across the country are unable to afford the essentials we all need to eat, stay warm, dry and clean.

**The need for food banks in the Trussell Trust network has accelerated throughout the past six months,** and food bank managers are warning of a growing crisis following the cut to Universal Credit in October 2021, as the cost of living continues to soar:

- July – September 2021 saw a 10% increase in comparison to the same period in 2019
- October – December 2021 saw a 17% increase in comparison to the same period in 2019
- January – February 2022 saw a 22% increase in comparison to the same period in 2020

**Southend Foodbank is clear that its team will always do all they can to help people in the community – but they cannot, and should not, be needing to distribute emergency food parcels on this scale. Natasha Copus, Southend Foodbank Project Manager explains,**

“There'll always be a role for strong community groups looking out for their neighbours, and we're so grateful for the generous support of our volunteers and to local people who have donated to the food bank. Together, you've made sure that local people who can't afford the essentials don't face hunger.

“The support we see across the community for people on the lowest incomes is incredible. But it shouldn't be needed. We should all be free from hunger. No one should be pushed deeper into poverty without enough money for the things we all need. It's not right that anyone in Southend needs our food bank in the first place - everyone should be able to afford the essentials.

“At the moment the situation is only set to get worse, as this is just the start of the cost-of-living crisis. But we know what's pushing people to need food banks like ours, so we know what needs to be done. People cannot afford to wait any longer for support – UK, national and local governments at all levels must use their powers and take urgent action now to strengthen our social security system so it keeps up with the true cost of living.”

**ENDS**