

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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38% rise in people needing foodbank support

New data from Nourish Community Foodbank shows 6,382 people, (a 38% increase on the previous year), received emergency provisions in 2017-2018. A referral equates to a three-day emergency supply of food and toiletries.

Nourish Co-Chair, Paul Haines, explains: “It is incredibly worrying that we are still seeing such a significant increase in the need for foodbank services year on year and this seems to not just be in the number of referrals, but the length of time we support individuals. One of our core aims is to ensure that people do not become reliant on our services and so we have a maximum policy of twelve foodbags per individual in any one year. In the past only 20% needed more than three foodbags, that figure increased to 35% in 2017/18. It is quite shocking to think that during that 12-month period, Nourish provided 57,438 meals which equates to a meal for every single person living in Tunbridge Wells town centre.¹”

There are many reasons that people need the support of Nourish. These include:

- 36% required help because of benefit changes, including Universal Credit
- 13% as result of domestic abuse
- 13% due to debt
- 11% were referred as the result of unemployment
- 10% due to accident or illness
- 7% due to low paid work.

Dawn Stanford, Nourish Operations Manager, explains: “While these figures paint part of the picture of what is happening for people in crisis within our community, they often don’t tell the wider story. When you look at the 11% (up 57%) referred as a result of unemployment, that figure includes retired people. Looking at the 7% (up 40%) due to low paid work, this incorporates all aspects of the increasing gig economy - zero hours contracts, temporary contract work and poorly paid jobs.”

Of continuing concern is the fact that 46% of those Nourish supports are children (0-18 years). Dawn continues: “We don’t imagine the affluent-perceived Tunbridge Wells borough as having a poverty issue and yet in Tunbridge Wells alone, a shocking 16% of children are living in poverty.²”

Dawn concludes: “From the feedback we get from clients, I know that what Nourish gives is so much more than a food bag, it’s a lifeline, a hug, an act of kindness from a stranger when you feel like there is no way up. Each year I am touched by heart-wrenching situations; the elderly couple who had not eaten fresh meat for months, the teenager whose mum died suddenly and had to cope on her own, the domestic abuse victim who had come to Tunbridge Wells so she and her children couldn’t be found, who tracked her days free by opening the doors on a donated advent calendar.

We are so grateful for the generosity of the public in giving the gift of food, financial donations and their time volunteering with us to be able to continue to keep up with this increasing demand. Did you know that Tunbridge Wells was recently voted the 9th happiest place to live in the UK³ and one of the main reasons cited was “community spirit”? At Nourish, we were not surprised by this as Tunbridge Wells so often steps up to look after its most vulnerable neighbours.

My one wish would be that we get to a future where a foodbank isn't needed anymore but for now if we all gave just £3, the cost of a takeaway coffee, that could pay for a meal for someone in crisis in 2019. Visit www.nourishcommunityfoodbank.org.uk or text FOOD35 £3 to 70070.”

¹Source: KCC Census 2011

²End Child Poverty 2018. <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/poverty-in-your-area-2018/>

³Source: Rightmove survey 2018

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