

# POVERTY AND FOOD INSECURITY

## Food bank use in Wandsworth Borough 2018-19

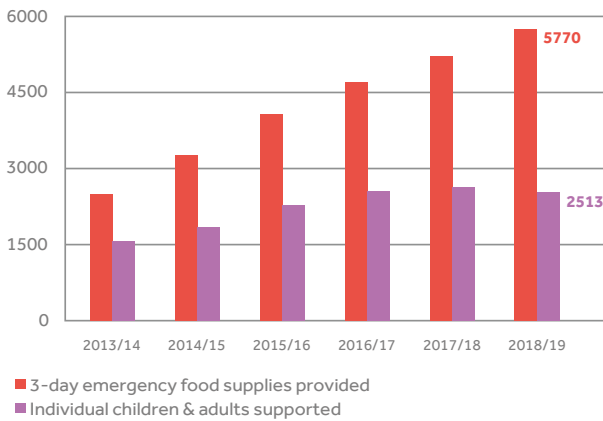


As a society, we believe in justice and compassion, and protecting each other from harm. But right now many people in Wandsworth Borough are locked in poverty, unable to afford basic essentials like sufficient food.

**Statutory Services – like Wandsworth Council, jobcentres, schools, GPs and mental health services – made 64% of all referrals,** indicating that the food bank is now an integral part of the social safety net, even though this was never its intention.

*'[The foodbank's] kind services have genuinely benefited our vulnerable service users by meeting needs in times of real crisis; where no other service can do this. Without such important work, our service users' wellbeing would deteriorate further and this has been prevented by this service.'* NHS referrer

### Emergency food supplies provided by Wandsworth Foodbank May 2013-March 2019

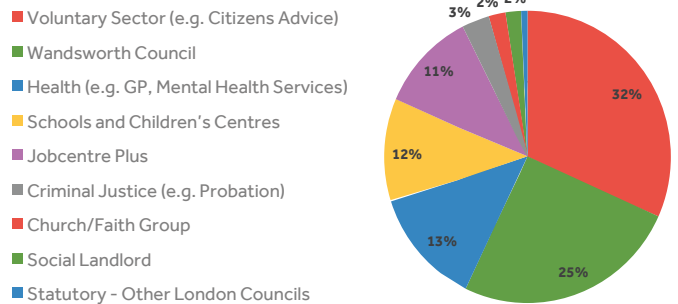


In 2018-19 we provided a record 5,770 three-day emergency food supplies to local people referred in crisis – a 78% increase in food supplies provided in five years. Thirty-seven percent of food supplies were for children.

Local people were welcomed at our five food bank centres in Battersea, Clapham Junction, Tooting, Putney and Southfields; exchanging referral vouchers for food and essential toiletries. Volunteers offered people a chance to chat, signposting to further support and referral to our specialist Foodbank Adviser (in partnership with Citizens Advice Wandsworth).

*'I was made to feel at ease and not feel judged or humiliated for needing to use the service. Everyone was very friendly, helpful and supportive. I was also able to access advice which I wouldn't otherwise have done.'* Guest to the food bank

### Who referred people to Wandsworth Foodbank in 2018-19? % of 2,660 referral vouchers



The top three reasons for food bank referral were 'income not covering essential costs', 'benefit delays' and 'benefit changes'. Problems with benefits accounted for 40% of all referrals. The five-week wait for first payment of Universal Credit was a key issue leading to referral, cited by 7 in 10 local referrers.

Referrals due to 'income not covering the cost of essentials' were mainly linked to benefits not keeping pace with the cost of living, said 9 in 10 local referrers, as we enter the 4th year of the government's freeze on benefits.

### Primary reasons for referral to Wandsworth Foodbank 2018-19 % of 2,660 referral vouchers



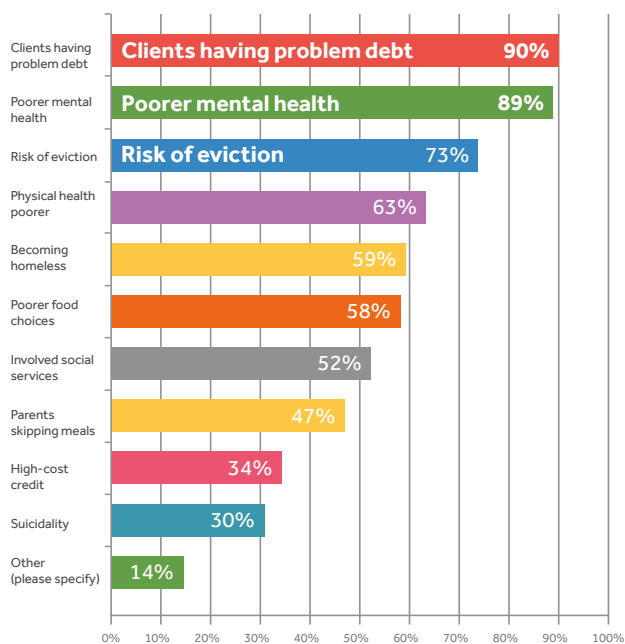
## Benefit changes + delays

No recourse to public funds 7%

**Poverty and food insecurity severely impacts the lives of local people who experience it. Poorer mental health and problem debt were the most common impacts, cited by 9 in 10 referrers. Two-thirds of referrers cited poorer physical health (63%) as an impact they had seen – rising to 93% of NHS referrers.**

*'I find it difficult when a person has struggled with mental health and their access to [benefits] is taken away almost immediately, thus affecting the person's mental health further... I really appreciate the Foodbank because without this organisation I wonder how some of my clients will eat from week to week.'*  
Voluntary sector referrer

**Impacts of financial hardship, poverty & hunger referrers saw in their clients % of 79 agencies**



**CLARA'S EXPERIENCE**

Clara is a single lady in her 50s who was employed full-time until she became unwell. After being refused disability benefit Employment Support Allowance, she was told to apply for Universal Credit. Clara waited six weeks for first payment and had to take a £100 Advance. By this time, Clara was facing mounting service charge and fuel debts, and didn't have enough money for food. Clara's jobcentre work coach signposted her to Wandsworth Foodbank.

Our Foodbank Adviser successfully challenged the ESA decision, resulting in the DWP back-dating seven months' payments to clear the service charge debt, and paying Clara an additional amount of Universal Credit. Sylwia also applied for a charity grant, which cleared Clara's fuel debt.

*'I just needed a bit of support to get back on my feet, but that five-week wait for Universal Credit was too long – I felt like I was sinking. I was already suffering from stress, and the system was making me more stressed. I was close to taking my life, it was so bad.'*

*'They made me feel I was another person trying to scrounge off the government, even though I've paid in all my life – I've worked since I was 16. I was getting £67 Universal Credit a week, because they took some out to repay the Advance. How they think people can get by on the small amount of money they provide, I don't know. You've got bills to pay, food to buy. I started visiting friends when they'd be having dinner, hoping they'd invite me to eat with them because I had no food at home.'*

*'Food bank was a life-saver, honestly. They gave me hope when I had lost all hope. It's not just the food but the all-round care. I remember standing at their door crying, because things had dropped so low. But the food bank was a safe and welcoming place, and Sylwia fought for me to get the help I needed. Things are so much better now. I'm looking for a part-time job until I get my health back and can work full-time again.'*

- Clara

**POVERTY, AND THE NEED FOR FOOD BANKS, IS NOT INEVITABLE. IT CAN BE SOLVED.**

We think there are concrete actions that would help lift the restrictions of poverty and food insecurity from local people, such as ending the five-week-wait for Universal Credit, and employers paying the Living Wage. You can see the full report at [wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk/report-2019](http://wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk/report-2019)

**A huge thank you to ...**

**215**

**REGULAR VOLUNTEERS**

...who gave more than **6,000 hours** to help in 2018-19, plus the many corporate teams who helped during the year too.

**64.7**

**TONNES OF DONATIONS**

...everyone who gave food and other essential toiletries to help their neighbours through Wandsworth Foodbank.

Registered Charity No. 1149780



Wandsworth Foodbank is run by local churches, with and for the local community, and is open 7 days a week.



@WandsworthFB



wandsworth.foodbank.org.uk