

# Focus on Foodbanks in Kent

An overview of health and social care issues faced by people using foodbanks in Kent with proposed strategic solutions



**The numbers of people using Foodbanks is increasingly dramatically across the UK.**

People who use Foodbanks are often experiencing a time of crisis in their lives. For most of them, sharing their experience of health and social care services is not top of their priority list. However, it is vital that the people who provide those services hears and understands how they can best serve people during a difficult period in their lives.

We made contact with Foodbanks across Kent. We heard about issues of stigma and challenges around mental health & discharge from hospital.

## Foodbanks in Kent

**An estimated 35,000 people used a Kent Foodbank in 2017. That number is increasing all the time.**

Foodbanks are provided by a wide range of organisations from large national charities to small local church and community groups.

Foodbanks receive donations through a variety of routes, including local collection points, food sharing schemes and Harvest Festival and Reverse Advent initiatives.

People are referred to Foodbanks by hospital crisis teams, hospital discharge teams, social services, GPs, local churches, Department of Work and Pensions, bailiffs, housing department and Age UK.



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# What are the issues?

## Foodbanks raised the following issues and concerns

Many Foodbanks talked about the challenges of supporting someone with mental health issues. They told us they were frustrated by the lack of response from mental health teams and the police.

We heard about occasions when patients arrived at a Foodbank having been referred directly on discharge from hospital. Patients often arrive with just their medication but no accommodation or support package in place.

Foodbanks talked to us about the huge amount of time they spend supporting and advocating for people who have not got the health and social support that they need.

# What are they going to do?

During our conversations with Foodbanks it became clear that many Foodbanks would value an opportunity to get to know one another better and to explore the possibilities of working better together and sharing ideas and solutions to common issues.

Our parent company, Engaging Kent, has offered to fund and facilitate a workshop to bring Foodbanks together from across Kent.

### **This event will take place on March 2nd 2018**

The meeting will allow Foodbanks to come together, make connections and explore how they want to work together in the future.

### **Topics for discussion include**

- o Where are other Foodbanks, which areas do they cover and how can people be referred to them?
- o How do other Foodbanks support people who are experiencing mental health crisis? Are there any solutions we can share and benefit from?
- o How can Foodbanks build a strong relationship with social care professionals to access help efficiently, but also to explore how they can reciprocate this in return?

- o What training and support could be available to Foodbank staff and volunteers to support them in their daily work?
- o Healthwatch Kent would like to explore how we can hear and capture the voice of Foodbank users to ensure organisations can hear and learn from their experiences.

Anyone wanting to get in touch with Healthwatch to talk about this work or to share their experiences of any local health and social care service can call us for free on 0808 801 0102 or email [info@healthwatchkent.co.uk](mailto:info@healthwatchkent.co.uk)