

## Foodbank use rising: sign the “Fix Universal Credit” petition



# 13–21 October 2018

The Church of England is one of several coalition partners of Church Action on Poverty’s ‘End Hunger UK’ campaign. You can make a real contribution towards the goal of ensuring no one in the UK goes to bed hungry by **signing their petition** and getting others to sign it. The petition calls on the UK Government to ‘Fix Universal Credit,’ and is the response to new figures from the Trussell Trust, which runs 420 Foodbanks, showing that in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out foodbank use has risen 52%.

In St Albans Diocese, the use of Trussell Trust food banks has also increased during the last year, up 15%, meaning that 42751 three-day emergency food supplies were distributed. That’s apart from the independent food banks in the diocese.

Bishop Alan has given his backing to the petition and he is **encouraging churches to arrange for the petition to be signed during ‘End Hunger Week’ which runs from 13 - 21 October. The End Hunger website [endhungeruk.org](http://endhungeruk.org) has materials for download.**

The petition and accompanying campaign call for improvements to the design of Universal Credit and a long-term commitment to ensure the social security system provides people with an adequate income to afford good food on a regular basis. Without such action, we can expect to see more and more people turning to food banks and becoming trapped in poverty, as more people are moved on to Universal Credit.

Speaking on behalf of the charities behind the campaign, Niall Cooper, Director at Church Action on Poverty, said:

“You might imagine that in modern day Britain we all have enough food to eat, or that hunger is only experienced by the few. Yet we see working parents missing meals so that their kids can eat, and vulnerable individuals turning to charities on a daily basis to get a meal. This is simply unacceptable.

“That’s why we’re calling for an urgent, national conversation about what needs to be done, by the Government and others, to ensure that children get the food they need to give them the best start in life, and that nobody in the UK needs to go hungry.”

Frontline organisations working in areas where Universal Credit has been rolled out detailed four main reasons why people applying for or receiving Universal Credit were being forced to turn to them for help. They are: excessive waiting times; delays in receiving payments; debt and loan repayments and benefit sanctions.

Among the suggestions for how Universal Credit might be modified are: reducing the mandatory waiting time for payments; improving the support offered through the process of applying for Universal Credit and making it easier for people with training in computer literacy; improving accessibility and offering alternative methods of applying, such as by phone.

End Hunger UK is supported by many national organisations, including: Baptists Together; Caritas Social Action Network; Child Poverty Action Group; Church Action on Poverty; the Church of England; FareShare; First Steps Nutrition; Food Bank As It Is; Food Ethics Council; The Food Foundation; the Independent Food Aid Network; Food Matters; Magic Breakfast; the Methodist Church; Nourish Scotland; Oxfam; Quaker Peace and Social Witness; Sustain: the alliance for better food and farming; The Trussell Trust; and the United Reformed Church.