

Criteria for the allocation of foodbank vouchers: guidance for referral agencies

Bournemouth Foodbank seeks not just to provide emergency food to those in need, but also to restore dignity and revive hope. Our aim is to provide short-term practical help alongside other agencies seeking to address client's crises. As such, we invest trust in you, as a professional with knowledge of a person's circumstances, to make a decision on their need for emergency food, based on what you consider to be in the best interests of the individual at this time. We have developed the following guidelines to help you make this decision.

This guidance is not intended to be legalistic or limiting. As a professional, you will apply discretion, judgement and, as appropriate, compassion. To discuss individual cases or for further guidance, please contact:

Bournemouth Foodbank Staff | 01202 394505 | info@bournemouth.foodbank.org.uk

Key principles

To receive foodbank assistance:

1. the client should be in a state of actual food poverty (that is, having minimal food and insufficient means to purchase adequate food in the immediate term) or be demonstrably at imminent risk of being in that situation
2. the client's situation should be the result of an identifiable, current crisis
3. the client's circumstances should be known directly to the referring agency or the agency should be experienced in assessing the needs of members of the public and securing confirmatory evidence (where appropriate)
4. the client has not already received foodbank assistance three times for the specific crisis, unless specific arrangements for further support have been made with the foodbank project manager (please see 'Extent of Support', below)

Qualifying criteria

Each of the following criteria is sufficient eligibility for foodbank assistance, provided that the four key principles apply. This list is of examples, and is not meant to be exhaustive.

- No recourse to public funds**
- Benefit delay**
- Benefit reduction or suspension (including sanction)**
- Significant disruption to earnings due to ill health or hospitalisation**
- Loss of earnings due to reduced hours, or budgeting issues cause by erratic hours**
- Loss of one income in a previously two-income household**

- ❑ **Delayed initial wages on starting a new job**
- ❑ **Exceptional bill or expense for an essential service, e.g.**
 - **Failure of domestic heating system**
 - **Exceptional utility bill (for example, related to prolonged severe weather)**
 - **Major repairs to a vehicle that is essential to employment**
 - **Funeral costs**
- ❑ **Major dislocation due to accident or natural disaster, e.g.**
 - **Major domestic fire**
 - **Severe flood damage**
- ❑ **Loss of immediate financial means due to external causes, e.g.**
 - **Victim of robbery, including theft of food supplies**
 - **Credit card fraud**
 - **Abandonment by partner**
- ❑ **Increased living costs for a specific period of time e.g.**
 - **Taking on unexpected caring responsibilities**
 - **School holidays requiring additional meals for children normally entitled to free school meals**
- ❑ **Active engagement in a supported transition to a stable domestic life, but who are challenged by the immediate “start-up” costs; e.g.**
 - **Ex-offenders or ex-service personnel re-entering civilian life**
 - **Victims of domestic abuse re-establishing an independent life**
 - **Clients attempting a transition from homelessness to settled tenancy**
 - **Clients being rehabilitated after concluding a programme to overcome addiction or dependency**
 - **Patients returning home after extended stay in hospital**
- ❑ **Active participation in a reputable debt-reduction programme, with a personal commitment to escape from debt-dependency and sustain personal solvency**
- ❑ **Other causes of destitution (as defined by Joseph Rowntree Foundation: *a weekly income after housing costs of less than £70, plus £30 per additional adult, plus £20 per child*)**

Extent of Support

Foodbank assistance is for short-term crisis relief. In most cases, the client’s immediate crisis will be covered by one, two or three vouchers, and you issue these without contacting the foodbank. If the client’s crisis is still not resolved and you wish to issue further vouchers, please contact the foodbank before doing so. An additional number of vouchers, or period of support, may then be agreed as part of the broader support that will resolve

the client's need. Foodbanks are not resourced to provide unlimited support, which could encourage dependency, but aim to contribute towards resolving the client's underlying problems in partnership with other agencies.

Some situations in which extended foodbank support may be agreed include:

- continuing benefit delay
- continuing benefit sanction
- continuing destitution
- no recourse to public funds
- awaiting first wage payment
- awaiting settlement of another claim or appeal
- a second distinctly separate crisis (e.g. funeral costs, a second redundancy, or child holiday meal costs on top of an existing qualifying crisis)

Additional support is always at the discretion of the foodbank. It is likely to be agreed where circumstances justify, but will be refused for clients suspected of abusing the system. Foodbank assistance is not usually provided to those simply with long-term financial difficulties, though each client's case will be considered separately.