



Foodbanks in Jersey 2017 Usage Report

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Introduction

This report looks at data collected in the first quarter of 2017 from the three main food providers, The Grace Trust, St Helier Methodist Centre and St Vincent de Paul. These organisations provide food as well as items such as clothing, cooking equipment and home supplies to people in need.

Other organisations that provide this support include: The Salvation Army, Love thy neighbour, Variety – the children’s charity, Shelter Trust, the Red Cross and Caring Cooks (although this is not an exhaustive list).

A pilot study conducted in 2016¹, suggested that the data collection be repeated during the first quarter of 2017. In order to provide comparable results, and allow for analysis of year-on-year change – including any increase or decrease in use.

This follow on report, therefore will endeavour to look at like for like comparators.

Background

UK Data

In the UK the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network released a report in June 2017² from the University of Oxford, concerning the profile of people receiving emergency food assistance.

The Trussell Trust operates on a different model to our food banks in Jersey and only provides support to clients who have been specifically referred on from a government agency and have a trackable voucher that must be used within 3 days. The aim is to provide short term support while more permanent support is sorted out.

The team at Oxford University used a multi-stage sampling strategy using volunteers identified by the food banks.

The report was the result of an in-depth survey conducted with over 400 households across 18 foodbanks:

- Half the people surveyed were disabled and unable to work.
- People in work and using food banks were those with part-time or insecure work.
- All households had incomes in the past month that fell well below the threshold for low incomes.
- Over 78% of households had skipped meals or even gone days without eating in the past 12 months;
- 1 in 2 had gone without heating because they couldn’t afford it; and
- 1 in 5 had slept rough in the last year.

Almost all households had experienced at least one of the following indicators of financial vulnerability:

- a drop in income in the past three months,

¹ Food banks in Jersey 2016 Usage Report.

² Loopstra, R. & Lalor, D. , Financial insecurity, food insecurity, and disability: The profile of people receiving emergency food assistance from The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network in Britain, June 2017

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- unsteady incomes,
- an unexpected expense or rise in expenses in the past three months.

The conclusion of the report was that households that are referred to food banks are an extremely vulnerable population, with a depth of poverty, insecurity of incomes, and experiences of food insecurity and material deprivation.

It also concluded that people over-represented among food bank users are those with disabilities, lone parents, and single male households. The findings raised questions about the cost of living and whether the current UK social security is sufficient to meet basic needs, even for those in work.

Jersey Background to 2017 Report

The Food Banks usage pilot study conducted in 2016³ found that individuals seeking food assistance at that time were more likely to be male, born on the island and single with no dependent children.

There were a range of individual circumstances which led to the use of foodbanks, including long-term health issues and a change in the level of Social Security benefits paid. The latter often followed a change of circumstances in the household or because a job seeking sanction had been imposed. The use of foodbanks appeared to be lower in Jersey than that recorded in the UK.

Since the report in 2016 there has been a lot of effort put into joint working between food banks and government agencies and this collaborative approach has continued to improve throughout 2016 and 2017.

Since 2010 questions have periodically been asked in the yearly Jersey Annual Social Survey (JASS) now called the Jersey Opinions and Lifestyle survey (JOLS) concerning money matters. JASS was launched in 2005 to collect detailed information on a wide range of topics on an annual basis. It aims to provide everyone in the Island with a better understanding of social issues in Jersey, particularly the opinions and behaviours of the resident population, primarily so that policy decisions can be made from a more informed standpoint.

It is apparent from the results of these surveys that there are some ongoing social issues in our island. In 2017⁴;

- 8% households reported going without a cooked main meal every day at least 'sometimes' due to a shortage of money over the last twelve months, a proportion not significantly different from that in 2014⁵.
- Almost a fifth of households (19 %) reported finding it either 'quite' or 'very' difficult to cope financially in 2017. Almost a fifth (19%) of households thought their financial situation had improved over the last year, compared to over a quarter (28%) that

³ IBID

⁴

<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Government%20and%20administration/R%20Opinions%20and%20Lifestyle%20Survey%202017%20report%2020171130%20SU.pdf>

⁵

<https://www.gov.je/SiteCollectionDocuments/Government%20and%20administration/R%20JASS%202014%2020141125%20SU.pdf>

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thought it had worsened. These are similar proportions to the last time this was asked, in 2014.

- 4% of households reported being in arrears for rent or mortgage in the last 12 months, and 5% for their electricity, gas or oil bills (proportions similar to 2014).

It should be noted that there has been a recent social media and internet movement called OLIO⁶, which is a free app connecting people with their neighbours and with local shops so surplus food and other items can be shared, not thrown away. This may be food nearing its sell-by date in local stores, spare home-grown vegetables, bread from the baker, and groceries from individuals. OLIO can also be used for non-food household items too. The aim of OLIO is to reduce wastage.

There has been no research conducted as to the effect this has had on the usage of food banks at is it such a recent innovation but there is some evidence that the OLIO app is being well used in Jersey and many local businesses and individuals are providing goods. Anecdotally, many of the users of foodbanks do not have regular access to social media so it may be more difficult for them to regularly access this facility.

Key findings and available comparators

The three principal providers of food assistance - The Grace Trust, St Helier Methodist Centre and St Vincent de Paul – had agreed to participate in the pilot study, collecting usage data on their services throughout the first quarter of 2016. These same providers were contacted to collect the same data during the first quarter of 2017

Usage of foodbanks

Table showing the number of visits by foodbank

	St Vincent visits	St. Helier Methodist Centre visits	Grace Trust visits	Total visits
2016 Q1	unavailable	69	181	?
2017 Q1	122	63	179	364

Table showing the additional statistics provided by Grace Trust foodbank

Grace Trust statistics	food supply bags provided	Number of individual people/visits
2016 Q1	354	181
2017 Q1	296	179

St Vincent de Paul had visits from 122 clients in the first quarter of the 2017 (data unavailable for 2016) some coming regularly some only once or twice and with referrals from Citizen's Advice and the Grace Trust. Unfortunately this year only 21 of those people were willing to fill in a questionnaire (35 in 2016).

⁶ <https://olioex.com/food-waste-in/jersey/jersey/>

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St Helier Methodist Centre had visits from 63 people and supplied 49 questionnaires (69 visits and 48 questionnaires in 2016) and Grace Trust (in general the largest provider) had visits from 179 individuals but did not provide any questionnaires (97 in 2016) as they generally do their own breakdown of statistics at the end of each year. It is important to note that the St Helier Methodist centre only take referrals from other agencies – people cannot self- refer or get help without a referral.

Unlike the first quarter 2016, it is difficult to estimate the number and demographics overall of those who visited foodbanks, without the breakdown data from Grace Trust and with the small number of people who agreed to fill in questionnaires over the 3 month period in 2017.

We can only say that we know St Vincent de Paul had visits from 122 clients, 63 visited the St Helier Methodist Centre and 179 visited Grace Trust, a total of 364 people. It is not possible to interrogate the data to the extent we can safely say whether individuals visited other establishments and how often, however we know that some visited the same establishment more than once and some on a regular basis.

The total number of food supply bags given out by Grace Trust in the first quarter 2017 has fallen from 354 (2016) to 296 in 2017 although the number of clients remains fairly similar (181 in 2016 and 179 in 2017). The Grace Trust still try to maintain a two week space between each visit unless there is dire need so at this time are uncertain as to the cause of the drop in distribution of food bags.

Profile of Users

Table showing the number of questionnaires received

Questionnaires received	St Vincent	St. Helier Methodist Centre	Grace Trust	Total
2016 Q1	35	48	97	180
2017 Q1	21	49	0	70

As the table above shows, fewer than half the number of questionnaires were received in the first quarter of 2017 compared to the previous year. In particular, as the Grace Trust do their own analysis at the end of each year, there were no questionnaires from this foodbank. Due to the small numbers returned, and the lack of data from the Grace Trust, it is difficult to draw conclusions about the profile of all food bank users in Jersey.

Notwithstanding the above mentioned caveats, we can say that out of the 70 people who visited, St Vincent de Paul and Methodist food banks and filled in questionnaires, 42 were female and 28 were male, compared to 2016 when overall the users were more likely to be male (interrogation of the data last year reveals that the difference is mostly from the attendants at Grace Trust and the other two charities had a balance of female and male).

The age range was between 22 and 72, with the majority being 30 to 49, 15 were cohabiting and 55 were single, 20 had children and 50 had none. This reflects the profile from last year.

46 were born in Jersey, 6 from Portugal 16 from Britain or IOM and 2 from elsewhere with only 3 not having lived in Jersey long enough to gain a housing entitled status. This again reflects the data from last year where the majority were from Jersey or had lived in the island long enough to gain an “entitled” status for work and housing qualifications.

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Of those not born in Jersey, some had been here since 1964 others as recently as 2013. We also know that more than one individual was referred from other food providers so may have received help from another organisation, although the majority of referrals were from Citizen's Advice Bureau. Some users (17) did not state who had referred them but of those who did 50 were referred from CAB, 2 from Grace Trust and 1 from the Bridge.

A number of new clients at St Vincent de Paul also specifically requested help in the way of electricity vouchers.

Reasons for seeking food assistance

Common reasons cited for seeking food assistance were having a long-term health condition, general low income and debt or an unexpected problem that had meant unforeseen costs they could not manage.

Further support

Not many of the respondents filled in the questions about further information but those that did included:

- Looking for work (work experience)
- Someone to talk to
- Advice on managing money

Summary

Whilst the data supplied is not sufficient to supply empirical evidence of the profile of foodbank users, or a comparison between 2016 and 2017 in Jersey we can say that the limited data we have is very similar to the first quarter 2016.

The total numbers who visited Grace Trust and St Helier Methodist Centre appear similar to 2016.

There are also similarities with the UK Trussell Trust Report into the profile of users in that long-term health conditions, general low income and debt or an unexpected problem that had meant unforeseen costs they could not manage were the most common reasons for visiting a foodbank.

The conclusions from the UK report are that those who attend food banks are an extremely vulnerable population, with a depth of poverty, insecurity of incomes, and experiences of food insecurity and material deprivation.

However it is important to note that there are a range of reasons why people visit food banks in Jersey and the lack of data available this year on food bank recipients will make it more difficult for the government to target help effectively to these vulnerable groups.

The results from the JASS and JOLS surveys are also of note and pertinent to this report in that so many Jersey households are finding it difficult to cope financially, are in arrears or finding it difficult to pay their electricity bills.

A further area of exclusion was highlighted anecdotally in that most of those attending food banks in Jersey may not have regular access to the internet or social media.

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Suggestions for the future:

1. Even though considerably less data was collected in the first quarter 2017, the reasons for visiting foodbanks appear fairly consistent with UK data. It is therefore uncertain whether a further collection of quantitative data will reveal anything new (unless all providers participate) apart from numbers. A qualitative examination of the reasons people visit food banks in the context of Jersey would most likely reveal more complex and useful information.
2. At the moment we have no data on the contents of the provisions given to recipients of food bank bags. The Multi-agency partnership involved in delivering the Food and Nutrition strategy should be engaged in considering the role food banks might have in supporting access to improved nutrition for vulnerable groups.