

Brighton & Hove Food Partnership annual picture of Food Bank and Emergency Food Use, 2017

14th September 2017

"Food poverty is going to get worse and foodbanks may be relied on for longer periods of time than 4-8 weeks. How, as a city, can we work together to support this?" - Food bank survey respondent, July 2017

Introduction

The Brighton & Hove Food Partnership is a non-profit organisation a hub for information, inspiration and connection around food.

We coordinate [Spade to Spoon: a city wide food strategy](#) and the [Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan](#). We support community food projects across the city, and coordinate the city's [Food Banks and Emergency Food Network](#).

Since 2014 we have carried out an annual survey of food banks in the city in order to understand food bank use, and improve our understanding food banks in the city and their support needs. The survey and interviews for this report were carried out in July 2017. Previous reports and our other research can be found at www.bhfood.org.uk/resources.

Who operates our food banks and who are they for?

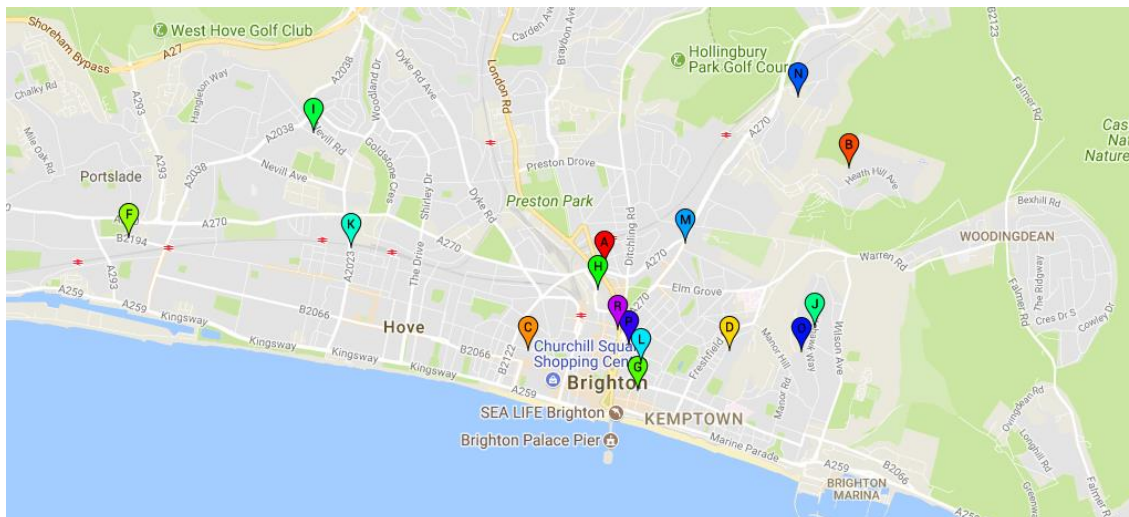
There are currently 16 food banks in Brighton & Hove. There is a further food bank in Shoreham which may be accessed by Brighton & Hove residents but is not included in this report. Since our previous annual report, YMCA DLG Youth Advice Centre has started distributing food parcels and so has been included in this report.

The majority of the city's food banks require a referral to access them i.e. people can't just turn up. Two food banks in the city do regularly give food on a drop-in basis but only to a tightly defined client group, and others may occasionally in a crisis situation.

Three food banks are run by City Council Children's Centres alongside their other support and services. There is only one [Trussell Trust](#)¹ Food Bank (in Whitehawk). The others are independent food banks operated by community groups or faith groups, some as a 'stand alone' operation and some alongside a range of other community services.

Several food banks, particularly those outside the centre, serve a 'catchment' area (Purple People Portslade, Hangleton and West Blatchington, Bevendean). The three children's centre food banks also serve their local areas (Whitehawk, Tarner and Moulsecoomb). City-wide food banks include Brighton Food Bank plus food banks supporting particular groups such as Voices in Exile (BVIE - for migrants and people without recourse to funds), Faith Alive Ministries (FAME – mainly students), YMCA YAC (13-25 year olds) and Brighton's Women's centre (women only). You can access the map [here](#).

¹ The Trussell Trust is a charity that co-ordinates a network of over 400 foodbanks. <https://www.trusselltrust.org/>



“We have been running for over 3 years and have helped residents out of poverty. We have some regular users who are in long term financial difficulties due to debt, delayed/irregular benefits and caring responsibilities. Some of the users have started volunteering for us and moved on to paid work” - food bank survey respondent, July 2017

Food bank overall usage: I findings from 2017 Food Banks Survey

Information provided by 16 food banks

The 2017 survey found that food bank usage in Brighton and Hove continues to slowly but steadily increase².

In 2017 **16** food banks gave out roughly **315** food parcels per week

In 2016 **15** food banks gave out roughly **298** food parcels per week

In 2015 **15** food banks gave out roughly **289** food parcels per week

In 2014 **13** food banks distributed **266** food parcels per week

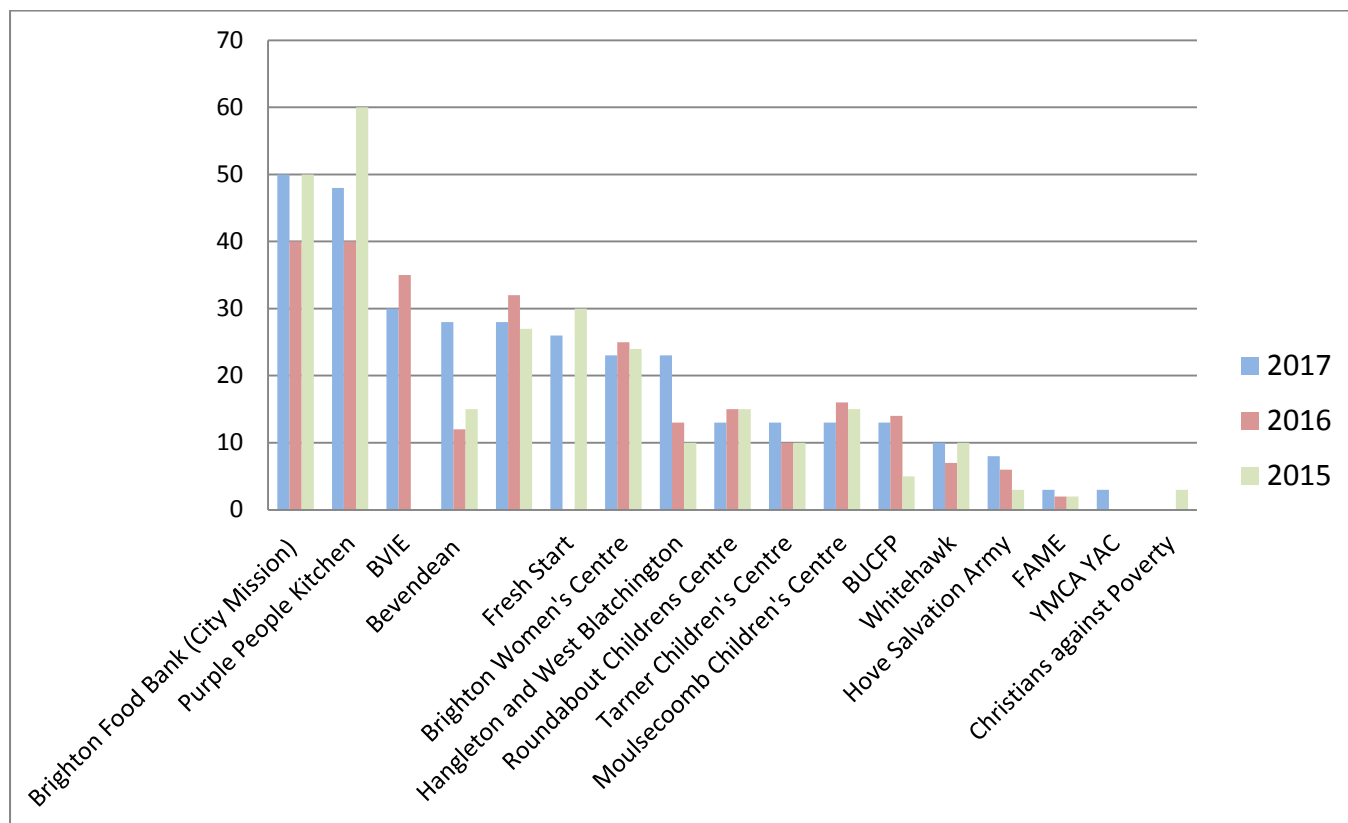
In 2017 the average value of a food parcel is roughly £20; in 2016 it was £23 and in 2015 it was £22.

When asked, none of the food banks reported a decrease in demand from last year. Three reported that demand was roughly the same and **seven** reported that there had been an overall **increase in demand**.

We found changes to the patterns of who uses food banks and why, including a noticeable increase in demand from people experiencing homelessness/inadequate housing and those in temporary housing. Please read on for more details.

² The figures in this report are from Brighton and Hove Food Partnership’s annual ‘Food Banks and Emergency Food Survey’. 16 food banks and emergency food providers took part in the July 2017 survey either via an online survey or over the phone. All quotations come from this survey and the case studies of service users (the stories) were from interviews which took place at Purple People kitchen food bank in Portslade in July 2017.

Food parcels distributed by food banks in Brighton & Hove 2015-2017



Brighton & Food Partnership:

Resources to support people experiencing food poverty

Advice for people experiencing food poverty <http://bhfood.org.uk/food-poverty-advice>

How to refer to a food bank (includes infographic map of pathways produced with food banks in the city) <http://bhfood.org.uk/referring-to-a-food-bank>

Notes from food bank network meetings: <http://bhfood.org.uk/support-for-food-banks>

Budget eating advice: <http://bhfood.org.uk/eating-on-a-budget> (also printed leaflets)

Free & low cost meals: <http://bhfood.org.uk/accessing-low-cost-meals>

*Our **resources page** includes the **food poverty action plan**, **One Year On Report**, our annual **report into food bank use**, and other **publications** e.g. research on shared meals <http://bhfood.org.uk/resources>*

Why People Use Food Banks:

Alison's story

(Not her real name)

"I haven't been homeless for 6 weeks now and it is all down to them"

"Before I became homeless I had my own house and a job... I had been married for 24 years and my partner left me for a younger woman. The house was in his name. When it went to court, he gave our house to his father as a gift. So I had nothing, I ended up without a penny. My job got harder because when I was first on the street I didn't know anything about being homeless ... It was finding somewhere to sleep, finding somewhere safe to wash and storing your stuff when you go to work. I was late a couple of times and then I was ill so I lost my job. I have applied for umpteen jobs but because you are homeless people don't want to know".

"I didn't know that the food bank existed... I had been living on the street for about 18 months before I found this place. It was just accidental. I bumped into a man called Jim who worked here. About three days before I had been mugged and beaten up. I had 153 bruises, I was black and blue. Jim explained to me how to get a referral; I could go through my job centre. The job centre had never told me about the referral. Being homeless I was living on £36 a fortnight, that's all they give you because they stated I had no rent to pay – no bills. What they don't understand is that when you are homeless you can't cook, so actually you need the same amount of money as a normal person that is not working because you have to buy your food. I was living on £18 a week, which is really hard when you have to eat plus buy toiletries... So I came here".

"You get a free meal every Friday and tea and coffee when you come here. Because they knew that I had no cooker and no fridge they provided me with food that would last during the week. Jim had somebody's old gas cooker and [another volunteer] had the gas for it, so then I had a little stove of my own. I could then take tins of soup, baked beans, anything that you could cook in a saucepan or a pan. They gave me a sleeping bag, they gave me toiletries, honestly this place is amazing and I can't fault it at all. I have just found out that I have colon cancer so I have a restricted diet but they always make sure that there is enough fruit and veg for me, because that is all I'm eating at the moment. With the help of this food bank I am getting back on my feet. I haven't been homeless for 6 weeks now and it is all down to them. They are absolutely amazing and brilliant; I don't know what I would have done without them".

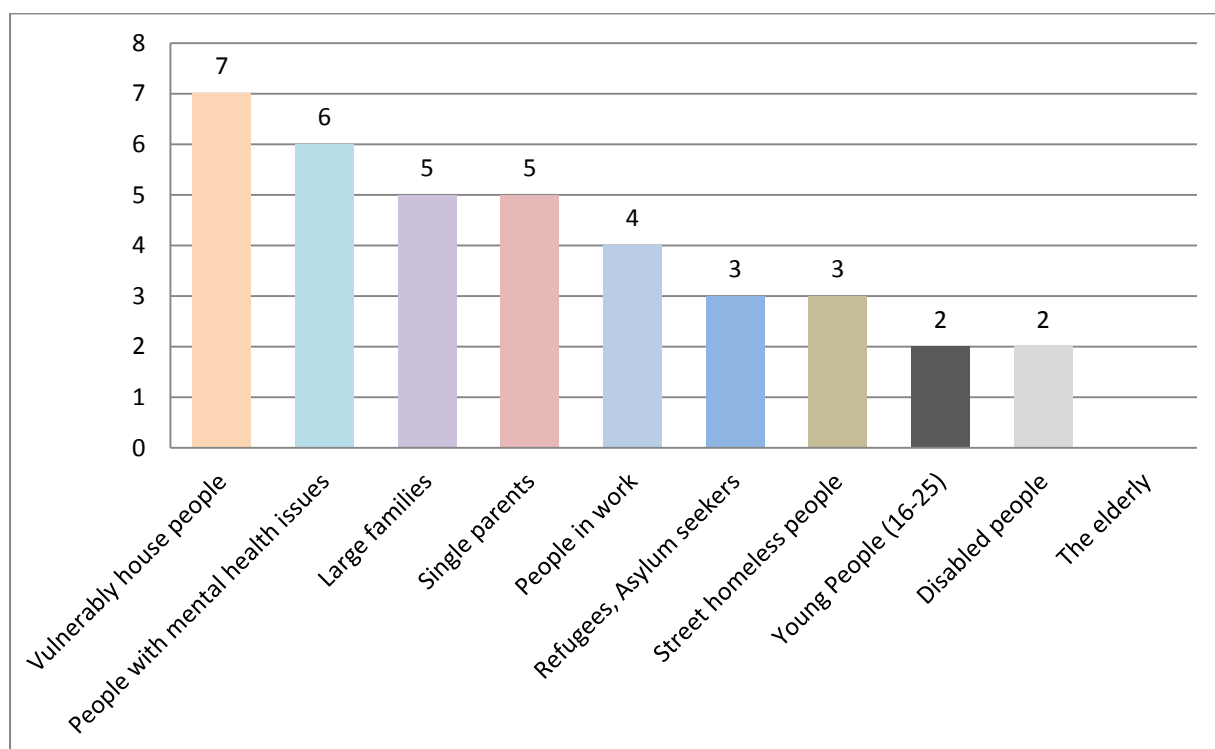
From an interview at the Purple People Kitchen, Portslade,
July 2017

Food bank use: a changing picture?

Information provided by 10 food banks

Food banks were asked in the survey about changing patterns in demand, especially from some of the groups which had been identified in the city's Food Poverty Action Plan as most at risk from food poverty. We found that:

- Seven out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand over the last year from **vulnerably housed people and people in temporary accommodation**.³
- Six out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand from **people with mental health issues**.
- Five out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand from both **large families** and **single parents**.
- Four out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand from **people in work**.
- Three out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand from **refugees and asylum seekers** and **street homeless people**.
- Two out of ten food banks reported an increase in demand from **young people** (16-25) and **disabled people**.
- However, one food bank reported a decrease in demand over the past year for young people (16-25).



"The social aspect of the [food bank] is equally important. Many of the clients have formed friendships. Some have become helpers. Within our setting they are able to relax and this helps many with mental health. Loneliness and isolation make people unhappy and this in turn gives them issues. Food related anxiety poses problems on many levels from obesity to malnutrition"

- food bank survey respondent, July 2017

³ This reflects a wider city issue: When comparing 31 March 2016 to 31 March 2012, nearly 2¼ times more households live in temporary accommodation - Brighton & Hove Housing Statistical Bulletin 2015/16

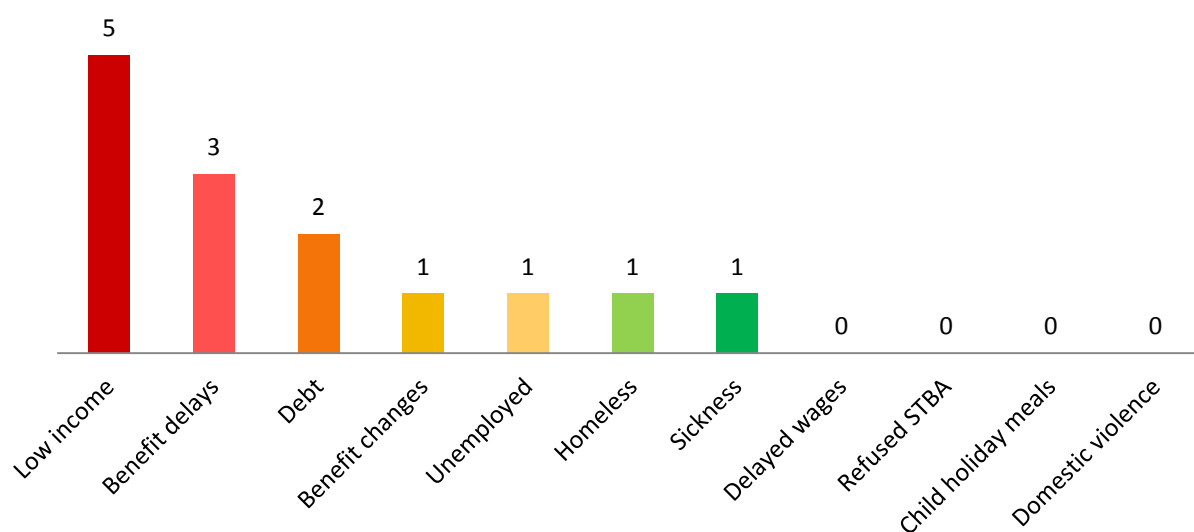
Why are people accessing food banks in Brighton & Hove?

Information provided by 14 food banks

This question was asked in the survey for the first time in 2016. The city's Food Poverty Action Plan includes an action for food banks to **record** reasons for usage using categories devised by the national food bank provider, the Trussell Trust, so local data can be compared with national data.

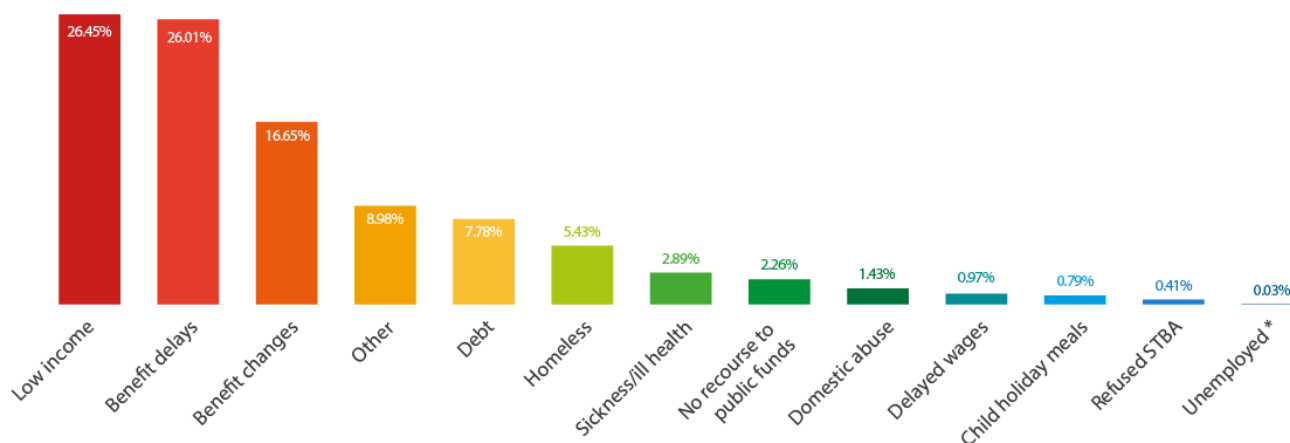
Fourteen food banks supplied information on the reasons for food bank use of which three surveyed their clients using the Trussell Trust categories, eight surveyed their clients using an alternative system and three supplied self-reported perceptions of demand. They reported that **low income, benefit delays and debt** were the main reasons clients use their service.

Most important reason for food bank Use, Brighton & Hove 2017



Reasons for food bank Use Nationally - Trussell Trust figures

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/end-year-stats/>



* This shows data from 1 April to 5 May 2016 when it stopped being recorded as a main crisis cause

"Looks like [food poverty] will grow through [universal credit] introduction" - food bank survey respondent, July 2017

Direct comparisons with national Trussell Trust figures need to be treated with caution as the sample size locally is small. Moreover, Trussell Trust food banks all gather data using the same standardised methodology, whereas, local food banks are mainly independently run and their data collection methods are not all homogenous. Also, some local food banks offer a more flexible and/or longer term support package compared to the Trussell Trust food banks, so 'longer term' issues such as ongoing low income are perhaps more likely to figure over short term emergency situations.

Despite this caution, it does appear that **low income** and **benefit delays** are particular factors in food bank use both in Brighton & Hove and nation-wide.

Why People Use Food Banks: Debbie's story

(Not her real name)

"I'm a part time worker with 4 young children juggling everything"

Debbie is a mother of 4 children aged 7, 5, 3 and 1. She works part time at American Express and her husband is self-employed. In March her husband underwent a routine back operation in Brighton hospital but complications left him paralysed on the left side. As a result of this he is currently unable to work. However, the family haven't qualified for ESA (sick pay for the self-employed) because Debbie's wages are just over the living allowance. They began the application process for PIP (Personal Independence Payment) in March but are yet to hear whether they qualify or not.

"Every single penny that comes into the house is allocated for. I was behind on my electric bill prior to meeting up with The Purple People Kitchen because I have to choose what to pay for as I'm still not getting any extra government help. My food bill has dropped dramatically because of these people here. If it wasn't for them I would be behind on my bills. It really has been a life saver".

"I have been coming here since April and they have made me feel so welcome... It is the little things that take the pressure off. [Patrick] has given me his mobile number in case I am running late or I can't make it [e.g. picking up the kids from school] – so he will make sure that I at least get something. I have nothing but praise for the foodbank and volunteers. Even when they offer you a sauce or a vegetable that you wouldn't necessarily know about they tell you ways to cook it or give you ideas for dinners, that's helpful as well".

"You don't realise until help is really needed that there is really kind people out there. I didn't know places like this existed, even though they don't know you personally they pull together and help you. They don't have to do that. They have been absolutely amazing, they really have. They are such kind people giving up their time to help others. Hopefully my life will change and I won't have to bother them anymore and other people can come in my place. I will never forget them and if I can do anything to help them I would".

From an interview at the Purple People Kitchen, Portslade, July 2017

Are food banks able to meet demand?

Information provided by 11 food banks

In the July 2017 survey, out of the eleven food banks that responded, **five** said that they are **always able to meet demand**; **three** said that they could **usually meet demand** and **three** said that they **occasionally couldn't meet demand**. Two respondents stated that they often run out of products which are high in demand such as fruit, vegetables, toiletries and coffee. One respondent said that there are delays due to high demand and another said that they can "*only just*" meet demand. The Brighton Women's Centre gives women fortnightly slots, so they are able to provide for as many people as possible.

What is in a food parcel and what do food banks need?

Information provided by 14 food banks

Out of the fourteen food banks that responded to our question on food parcel content all of them said that they include **drinks** (e.g. tea, coffee) and **ambient food** (dry/long life food) and thirteen said that they include **toiletries** (e.g. sanitary products, soap, shower gel). Eleven include **fresh vegetables**, **fresh fruit**, **international food items** and **baked goods**. Ten include **microwavable food**, nine include **kettle-cook food** (e.g. pot noodles), eight include **ready to eat meals** (no cooking facilities needed) and three include **refrigerated food** (e.g. meat, dairy).

Ensuring fresh and healthy food reaches food banks is one of the actions in the city's Food Poverty Action Plan. Previously, food banks have raised issues regarding a lacking of certain items being donated. As a result, we have included a question in this year's survey asking food banks whether there are any items they would like more of or have trouble acquiring.

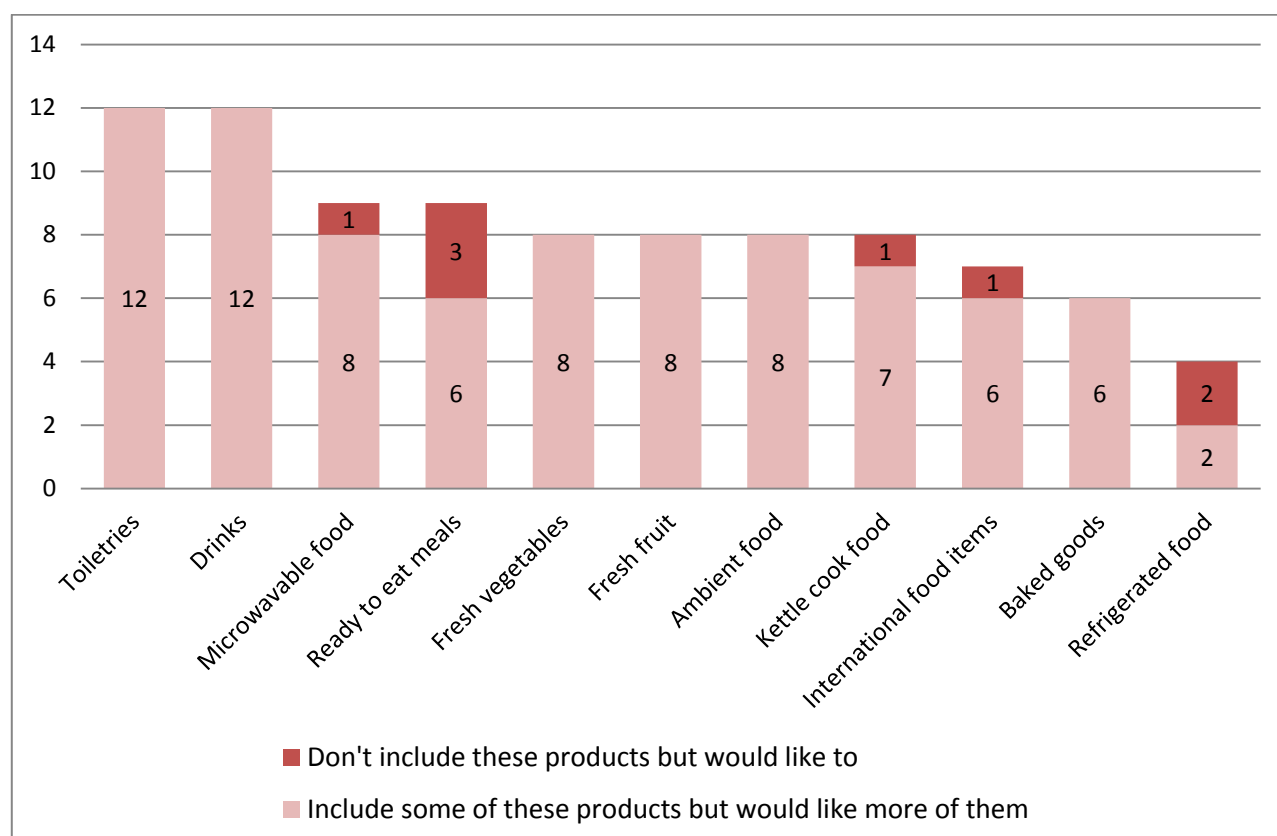
Twelve out of fourteen food banks reported that they would like more **toiletries** and **drinks** (e.g. tea and coffee).

Nine out of fourteen food banks reported wanting more **ready to eat meals** and **microwavable food**. This could be to do with the increase in vulnerably housed/ homeless people and people in temporary housing accessing food banks across the city (see above). Temporary accommodation often has very limited or no cooking facilities.

Eight out of fourteen food banks want more **kettle-cook food**, **ambient food**, **fresh vegetables** and **fresh fruit**. Seven reported that they would like more **international food items**. Six reported that they want more **baked goods** and four want more **refrigerated food**.

Three food banks specifically mentioned a need for more **tinned meat and fish** and tinned complete meals. Tins are non-perishable, so last for a long time without being refrigerated. They also allow service users to incorporate essential nutrients into their diet, such as protein and vegetables, without the need for cooking facilities.

Most sought after items by food banks in Brighton and Hove 2017



To what extent do service users have a choice in what their food parcels contain?

Information provided by 14 food banks

Four food banks allow service users to choose **half or more** of what goes into their food parcels and three let service users **choose everything** that goes into their food parcels. In one food bank service users **choose less than half** of what goes into their food parcels and in another service users **do not choose** what goes into their food parcels.

Of the five food banks that chose the 'other' option one food bank said that they **"have a shop style food bank, but give guidelines as to how many of each product service users can take"**. Three said that they try to meet dietary requirements e.g. allergies, cooking facilities and religions. Another food bank said **"Clients choose everything if on site but if in a hurry we do have to put a small minority of food parcels together for collection by an agency or if trying to squeeze an extra person in"**.

"We are interested in how food poverty intersects with other vulnerabilities. We have switched to a more empowering shop-style model of food bank to try and improve choice and reduce stigma around accessing a food bank" - food bank survey respondent, July 2017

Beyond food: What additional services do food banks provide?

Information provided by 11 food banks

“We have started a monthly food cooking workshop with the Soul food project. They come in and show people how to cook some of the unpopular food that comes into the foodbank. This happens during the foodbank session so people can watch the food being cooked and test it and ask questions. This is working very well and we have had some excellent feedback” - food bank survey respondent, July 2017

The majority of food banks already provide **money advice** for their clients, an area which was identified as a key need by food banks as part of the process of developing the city's [Food Poverty Action Plan](#)

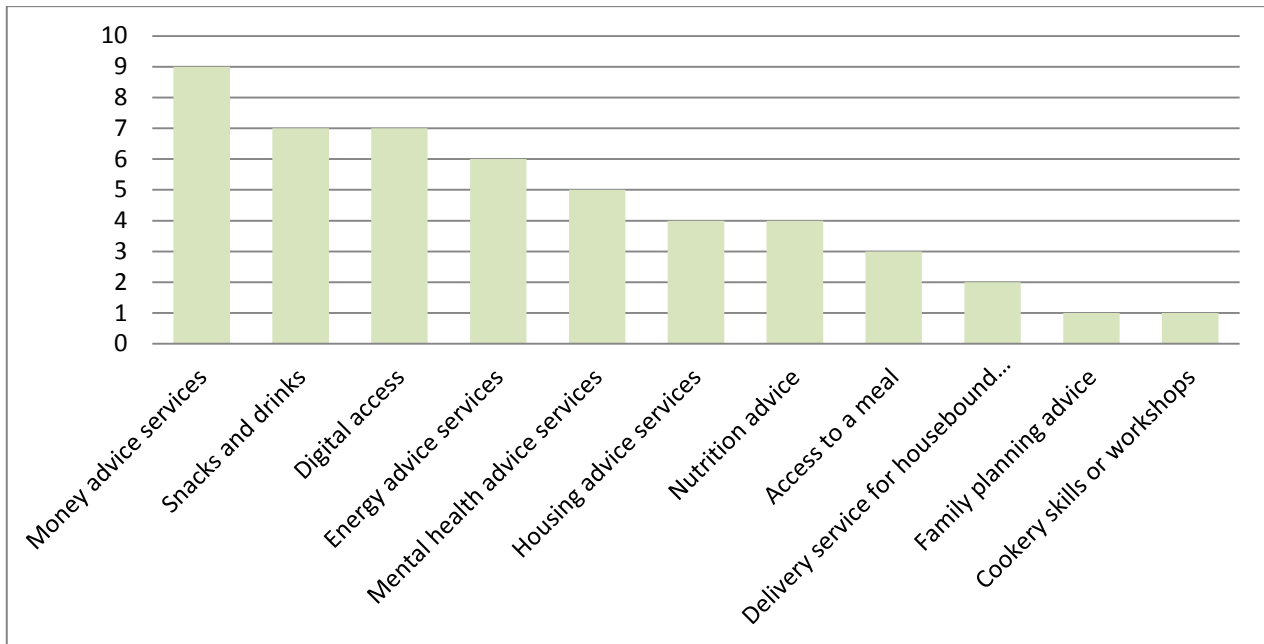
The biggest gaps identified were **cooking skills or workshops** which one food bank currently provides and another five would like to offer. Also, both **housing advice services** and **nutritional advice** which four food banks currently provide and another six don't provide but would like to in the future.

Other services which some food banks don't provide but would like to in the future are:

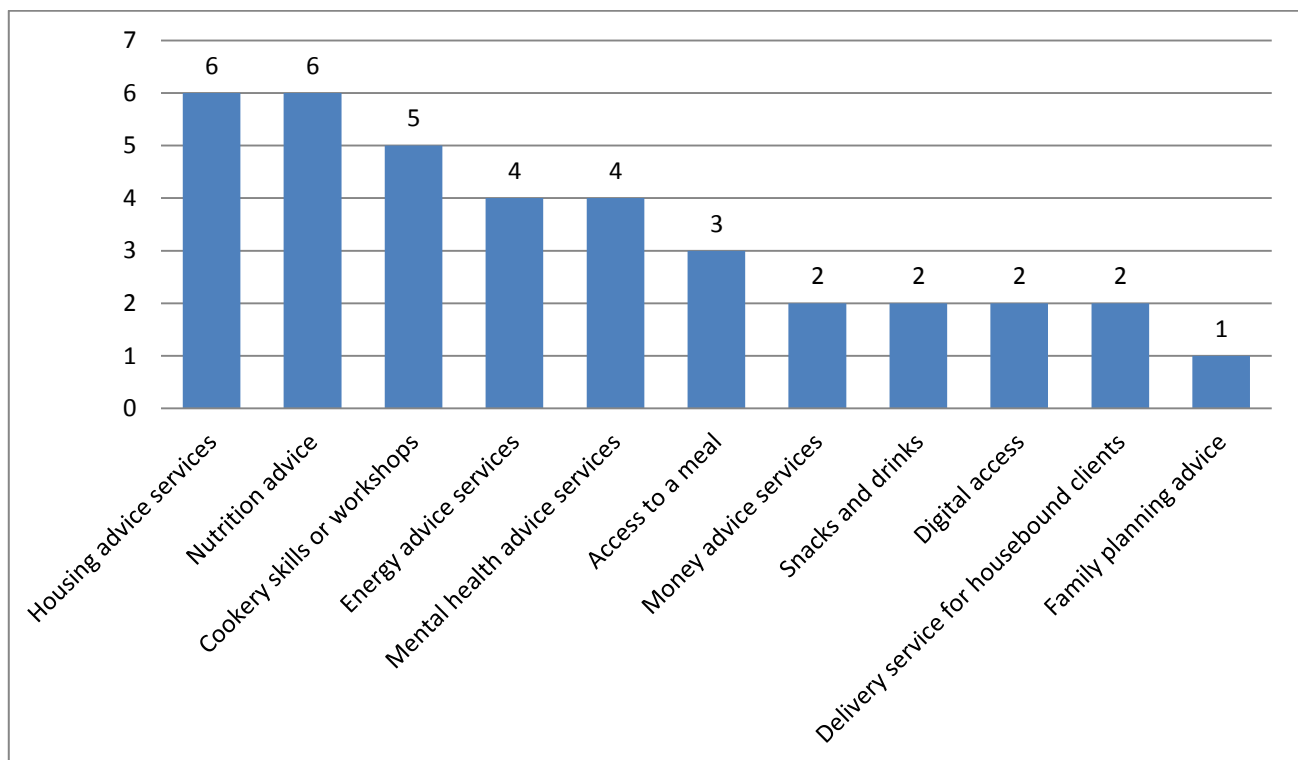
- Mental health advice services (4)
- Energy advice services (4)
- Access to a meal (3)
- Snacks and drinks (2)
- Digital access (2)
- Delivery service for housebound clients (2)
- Family planning advice (1)

One food bank occasionally delivers to housebound clients but doesn't have enough resources to advertise this as a service. Another provides benefit advice but doesn't provide debt advice and will be providing digital access and employment searching facilities from mid-September. Another food bank said *“We don't offer formal advice services... but our food bank runs alongside a drop in, so service users can get advice and signposting on a range of issues from volunteers”*.

Additional services currently provided by food banks in Brighton and Hove 2017



Additional services not currently provided but would like to in the future Food Banks Brighton and Hove 2017



Food Bank Accessibility

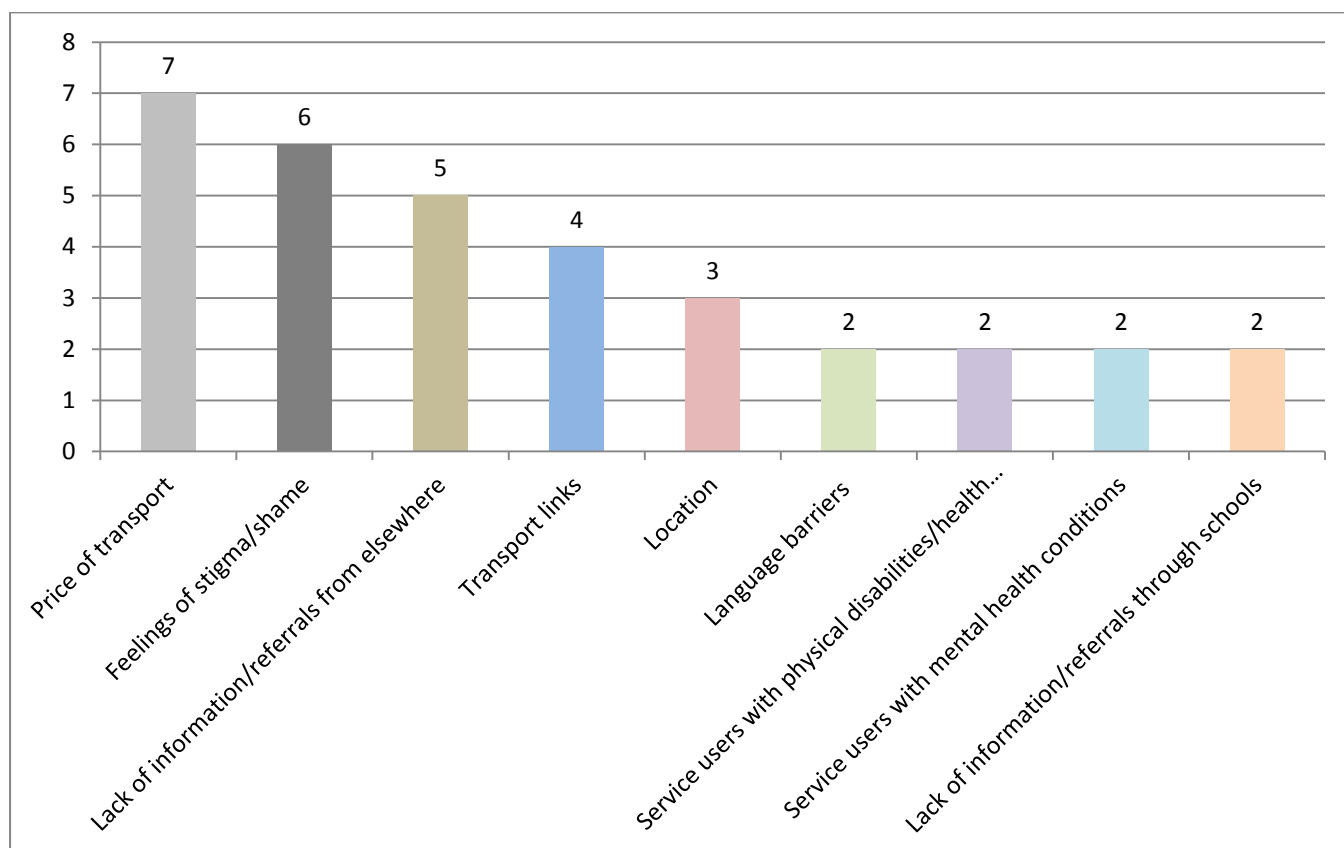
Information provided by 11 food banks

Within the survey food banks were asked what they felt were the main barriers to clients accessing their service.

- Seven out of eleven food banks identified the **price of transport** as being a major barrier preventing clients accessing food banks in the city. One food bank said that *"Sometimes clients cancel because they have not got bus fare to come in"*.
- Six out of eleven food banks felt that **feelings of stigma and shame** prevent clients accessing food banks.
- Last year food banks felt that lack of information about referrals through schools was a major barrier to preventing clients accessing food banks, because of this Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and Trust for Developing Communities worked together with Brighton & Hove City Council to help raise awareness with local schools. This year only two food banks still retain this belief and instead five food banks believe that a major barrier is the **lack of information and referrals from elsewhere**.

Other barriers identified as preventing clients accessing food banks include:

- Transport links (4)
- Location (3)
- Language barriers (2)
- Physical disabilities/health conditions (2)
- Mental health conditions (2)



Support to food banks

The survey also asked food banks in detail about their support needs e.g. training requirements to inform the work of Brighton & Hove Food Partnership and other organisations which support them. *This information is available as a supplementary report Please contact Brighton & Hove Partnership for a copy.*

“I think it is very much a co-operative thing - we cannot hope to address issues in isolation. Keep up the great work with the [food banks and emergency food] network and distribution - it is very much appreciated by the team here”

Note on methodology

Note these figures all depend on how you define a food bank. For this survey, organisations self-identified. Also, these figures are of self-reported perceptions of demand. Moreover, food parcels come in varying sizes with varying contents- some food banks vary parcel size depending on numbers in household and circumstances. Additionally it is very likely there are many people in the city that **may not be able to access a food bank**. Therefore this survey only gives a snapshot of the demand for food banks in the city and does not take into account the many people who are struggling but cannot or choose not to access food banks.

Note on BHFP’s wider food poverty work

Note also that the survey focuses on emergency food use. Emergency food poverty is only **the tip of the iceberg**. Previous research estimates by Brighton & Hove City Council in partnership with Brighton & Hove Food Partnership estimates that **23% of people in the city** have trouble paying basic costs including food.^[1] There are many more people who live with **longer term food poverty or household food insecurity are the focus of the city’s [food poverty action plan](#)**.

^[1] <http://bhfood.org.uk/Blog/the-launch-of-a-city-wide-action-plan-on-food-poverty>

Appendix: Food Banks in Brighton & Hove (see also <http://bhfood.org.uk/referring-to-a-food-bank>)

Food bank	Location	Criteria	Included:
Bevendean Community coffee morning & Food bank	Church Hall, Norwich Drive, BN2 4LA	Drop in for Bevendean residents only. Serving lower & higher Bevendean, Moulsecoomb, Meadowview, Bates Estate, Saunders Park, Lewes Rd corridor.	Yes
Brighton Food Bank	Calvary Church Building, Stanley Road, BN1 4NJ	Referral/ appointment only service – see website.	Yes
Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project	6 Tilbury Place, BN2 0GY	Drop in for cheap lunch or free lunch, small amounts of emergency food if in crisis. Referral required for food parcels.	Yes
Brighton Women's Centre	72 High Street, BN2 1RP	Can be referred or self refer – See website. Long and short term support.	Yes
Craven Vale Community Centre food bank	17A Hadlow Close, BN2 0FH	Drop in, proof of residency required.	Yes
Faith Alive Ministries	BMECP Centre 10A Fleet Street, BN1 4ZE	All types of Students (inc families) by referral. Bring NUS Card	Yes
Fresh Start Community Centre	131 Lewes Road, BN2 3LG	Registered families only.	Yes
Hangleton & West Blatchington Food Bank	St George's Street, BN2 1RP	Referral for Hangleton, Knoll & West Blatchington residents.	Yes
Hove Salvation Army	159 Sackville Road, BN3 3HD	Referrals via phone/email/self refer on Fridays/appointments.	Yes
Moulsecoomb Children's Centre	Hodshrove Lane, BN2 4SE	Local Children under 5 by referral.	Yes
Purple People Kitchen, Portslade	Victoria Road, BN41 1YF	Referral – see Basics Bank website.	Yes
Roundabout Children's Centre	Whitehawk Road, BN2 5FL	Local children under 5 by referral.	Yes
Shoreham Food Bank	St John Ambulance Building, BN43 6PA	Referral – See website for agencies.	No
Tarner Children's Centre	Ivory Place, BN2 9QE	Local children under 5 & pregnant mothers by referral.	Yes
Voices in Exile	St Magdalen Community Centre, BN1 3FH	Refugees / Asylum Seekers drop in.	Yes
Whitehawk Food Bank	St Cuthman's Church, Whitehawk Way, BN2 5HE	Referral through agencies who issue vouchers for the food bank.	Yes
YMCA DLG Youth Advice Centre	11 St George's Place, Brighton BN1 4GB	Registered 13-25 year olds living independently.	Yes