

Food Banks and Social Supermarkets

What is a food bank?



A food bank is a place which gives you free food,



or food which does not cost very much.



A food bank might also have toiletries like soap or toothpaste.



You might be able to talk to people at the food bank about:

- how you are feeling
- money problems
- benefits
- other support available in your community

Why might I need to use a food bank?



You might need to use a food bank if you do not have enough money to buy food.



You might not have enough money to buy food if:

- you do not earn much money
- your benefits do not give you enough money
- you are waiting for your benefits
- you are changing your benefits and your money keeps running out



You also might not have enough money to buy food if something happens which means you need to spend your money on other things.



For example, if your washing machine or cooker stops working and you need to buy a new one.

How do I use a food bank?



You might need to have a voucher to use a food bank.



It would be best to find out if you need a voucher before you visit – you can do this by speaking to people at the food bank or checking their website .

If you have anyone supporting you (social worker , doctor, school) they should be able to help you with this.



You give your voucher to the people at the food bank



and they give you some free food - normally enough for 3 days.



or you can buy food which does not cost very much.



If there is any food you can not eat because of your religion or beliefs, or it makes you unwell, tell the people at the food bank.

What is a social supermarket?



A social supermarket is a place where you can buy food, toiletries and things like washing powder.



It does not cost as much money to buy things at a social supermarket.



A social supermarket will not have all the things you can buy at other supermarkets and shops.

Why might I need to use a social supermarket?



You might need to use a social supermarket if you do not have enough money to buy everything you need.



You might not have enough money to buy everything you need if:

- you do not earn much money
- your benefits do not give you enough money
- you are waiting for your benefits
- you are changing your benefits and your money keeps running out



You also might not have enough money to buy everything you need if something happens which means you need to spend your money on other things.



For example, if your washing machine or cooker stops working and you need to buy a new one.

How do I use a social supermarket?



Each social supermarket has different rules about who can use it.



Each social supermarket has different rules about how to use it.



At some social supermarkets you pay with money.



At some social supermarkets, you pay to be a member and you get points to spend.



You can choose things which add up to the number of points you have.

What should I do if I think I need to use a food bank or social supermarket?



If you think you need to use a food bank or a social supermarket, you might want to talk to someone you trust.



This might be:

- a friend
- someone in your family
- someone else who knows you well
- a support worker



Find out:

- if there are any food banks and social supermarkets near you:

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank>

[Independent Food Banks Map | IFAN \(foodaidnetwork.org.uk\)](#)

- what days they are open
- how to use them

How to get help



You can get help and advice on our website at www.mencap.org.uk/COL



If you are worried about money, contact our Learning Disability Helpline:



Call us Monday to Friday on 0808 808 1111



Email us at helpline@mencap.org.uk



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First published 19.07.23