

This essay will explore how the Trussell Trusts current campaign # *five weeks too long* has engaged within the topic of poverty. It will critically analyse what effects Universal Credit has had on those who claim it. How they are thrust into a world of poverty and having to make difficult choices. Also considered will be the funding and what implications this has on the charity and its supporters. While taking into account how people are marginalised and discriminated against, and any health implications created when using foodbanks.

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO, no date) explains that campaigning is vital when creating a healthy society. The Trussell Trust (no date) a network of foodbanks believes that 'It takes more than food to end hunger'. That is why they bring together the experiences of food banks in their network challenging the structural economic issues that lock people in poverty' (The Trussell Trust, no date). According to the Trussell Trust (2018) the current number of people using food banks is up to 1.6 million, this is an increase of around 73% over the past five years, with an 18.8 % rise in the last year alone. Emma Revie the Trussell Trust (2018) chief executive believes that the role out of Universal Credit is to blame, particularly the five week wait for payment. Universal Credit is a monthly benefit paid to those on a low income or out of work (Gov.uk., no date). Iain Porter policy and partnership manager for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2019) agrees, suggesting that Universal Credit should be more 'flexible' and that claimants should not have to rely on charity to meet their basic needs.

The Trussell Trust feel so strongly regarding the five week wait they have developed a campaign in support #*five weeks too long* (Trussell Trust, no date). Criticising the five week wait, the campaigns aim is to challenge the government and their Universal Credit policy citing the need for change. The Trussell Trust (2020) believe that Universal Credit is forcing people to rely on foodbanks while they are vulnerable and often forced into poverty, calling into question the governments original claim that Universal Credit would 'substantially reduce poverty'. However, The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP, 2010) claimed the introduction of Universal Credit would be 'simple' claiming it would make it easier for people to get help they need, minimise errors and be a less complicated than the benefits system of the time.

The Trussell Trust have produced a document entitled, *The Next Stage of Universal Credit* (no date), this offers three recommendations for improvements to the Government with regard to the problems being experienced by people changing over to Universal Credit. The first recommendation asks the Government to be accountable during the changeover, ensuring that

people are not left without. One example of this was experienced by Neil Wright a disabled man who was interviewed by Katie Timms of Plymouth live, he explained how during his changeover he was left with 77p to live on for two weeks, after he was awarded only 1p in benefits (Plymouth live, 2019). Secondly if the Universal Credit support was lengthened to up to six months prior to the changeover, this would allow people time to prepare. The Government currently offer an advance payment to ease the wait (Trussell Trust, no date). However, Paula a mum from Bolton told the BBC (2020) how thanks to receiving an advance she was 'up to her eyes in debt' and resorting to foodbanks after her first Universal Credit payment was reduced to cover the advance. Finally, the Trussell Trust (no date) ask that the Government publish a schedule to ensure that there are opportunities to make changes while people are already in the process. Steve Bruce a team leader at the *Job Centre Plus* told Amy Orton a reporter for *Leicestershire Live* (2019) how he believes that Universal Credit is making a positive difference, claiming that although things have been difficult for many in the beginning many people are now seeing the advantages, and that the system has improved their lives while cutting the cycle of claiming benefits through the generations.

The Trussell Trust is partially funded by the Lotto community fund, being awarded substantial grants to support their network of foodbanks, they provide not only emergency food, but also debt and money management and cooking advice (community fund, no date). However, Becket and Lutter (2012) question lottery users asking 'why do those who can least afford it play the most' suggesting that many low income earners spend more of their income on the lottery than higher earners, which Cohen (2001) describes as the 'lure of the lottery' and a 'trigger' for 'daydreams' and an escape from reality, suggesting that those using the foodbanks are in way helping to fund it themselves from purchasing lottery tickets.

Bambi 141 (2017) a Sheffield University student critically analyses 'the good, the bad and the ugly truth' of food banks in 'food security and food justice, agrees that although food banks do incredible work in providing nourishment for those who would otherwise go hungry, there is another side to consider. All too often having to resort to using food banks brings the realization of the lack of ability to feed yourself or your family, leaving a feeling of shame and embarrassment. People using food banks could see themselves at the bottom of Maslow's (1943) theory of Hierarchy of Needs they have psychological needs from often being deprived of food, if they are homeless shelter is limited and they have little clothing and no means to purchase any (Eysenck, 2004). Contrary to this Pleace, Burrows and Quilgars (1997) argue that people who become homeless are often considered to be responsible for their own plight for

choosing not to work. However, In many cases their needs are not met as they have no security, employment or the resources to become employed, it can be assumed that the struggle for food could leave someone undernourished and have a negative effect on their health (Eysenck, 2004). Although the Trussell Trust (2019) claim that 1 in 7 of those who use food banks are in fact employed, suggesting that food bank usage is expanding into the working communities, further suggesting that poverty is growing. Coughlan (2017) reports that the blame should be on insecure or stagnant wages as well as ill health conditions, with many food bank users have a disability or mental health issues. Following Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, this in turn can affect someone's ability to love and their sense of belonging, as personal lives become affected from the humiliation attached, Browne (2011) supports this with his explanation of social exclusion, describing how people feel marginalized and excluded within society, leaving them without the opportunities to lead what is considered a normal life. The realisation that you are unable to feed yourself or your family can leave someone with little respect or strength, concluding in the self-actualisation of their situation and an acceptance of themselves (Eysenck, 2004). What should be a feeling of euphoria to reach the top, is in fact the lowest point in the acceptance of what life has become (Eysenck, 2004).

Research by Thompson, Smith, Cummins, (2018) claim that food poverty is linked to various health conditions, including obesity and malnutrition, An analysis for the Trussell Trust by Hughes and Prayogo (2018) into the nutritional value within the food parcels found that they were often high in salt and sugar. Bambi 141 (2017) agrees suggesting that that food banks are not always nutritionally balanced, there is a greater need for non-perishable food that will last longer and easier to store, unlike fresh fruit and vegetables. The NHS confirm that a diet that is high in salt can be attributed to many deaths (NHS, 2014). Maintaining a healthy diet is extremely difficult when relying on foodbanks especially for young families, restricted food has a direct effect on health and wellbeing, particularly as many have been in a poverty cycle from generation to generation Thompson, Smith, Cummins (2018). The British heart foundation (no date), however, claim that the Trussell Trust food parcels are nutritionally balanced, they say the food is easier to store as fresh food does not last long, and the fruit and vegetable tins provided all count towards their five a day, although they do admit that it is best to try and use the ones low in salt.

To conclude we can see the devastating affect the five week wait for Universal Credit is having on the population, considering the statistics for the last twelve months it can be seen that, this wait is pushing them into poverty and a need to rely on food banks. The rise in food bank use

in recent years shows they are in great need and are highly valued by those who use them. Despite much criticism of Universal Credit, the Trussell Trust campaign offer us no real solution. An extensive search of their campaign shows much criticism of Universal Credit, most of which is with just cause and supported however, there is no clear explanation for how any improvements to the five week wait could be achieved. The support from the Lottery is greatly needed although, the realisation that those who need it most are also contributing to the cause through buying tickets is hypocritical. The lottery indiscriminately sells the promise of a better life through advertisement that is aimed at those on a low income, then offer support to those people in desperate need through grants to charities, such as the Trussell Trust who also debt management. It can be seen that the giving of donations is vital to the Trussell Trust however, the lack of nutritious food remains a problem. This is an ongoing campaign that is only highlighted to those actually using food banks. This would suggest that although the campaign is not hugely in the public eye the message is however, getting to those who need it most.

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