



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

The Okehampton Foodbank aims to do more than simply provide emergency food. It also strives to restore dignity and revive hope for those in need.

We work alongside other agencies to provide practical, short-term assistance that helps your clients overcome their crises.

We plan to expand our network of support services so we can connect people with appropriate additional resources as needed.

As a professional familiar with the individual's circumstances, we trust you to decide whether they require emergency food assistance based on your assessment of their best interests.

We have developed the following guidelines to help you make this decision.

As a professional, you should exercise discretion, sound judgement, and compassion, as appropriate, rather than adhering strictly to this guidance.

To discuss individual cases or for further guidance, please **contact** Malcolm, the food bank coordinator on **07585 300 537** if no reply then please leave a text message. If urgent we would prefer you send people to us rather than they go hungry.

To receive foodbank assistance, the following key principles must be followed:

- The client must be experiencing *true* food poverty, meaning they have limited access to healthy food and lack the financial resources to obtain sufficient healthy food immediately.
- Alternatively, the client must be at clear and immediate risk of falling into such a state of food poverty.
- The client's situation should be the result of an identifiable, current crisis.

The referring agency should either have

1. Direct knowledge of the client's circumstances or
2. Be experienced in assessing the public's needs and obtaining confirmatory evidence, when appropriate.

Clients are eligible for 1-4 weeks of foodbank assistance, at your discretion.

Typically, no more than 2 vouchers per year are needed, allowing a maximum of 8 visits annually. However, additional support can be provided if the foodbank coordinator approves specific arrangements.

We will continue to help families who have ongoing difficulty obtaining a sufficient quantity of healthy food if we are able.

Qualifying criteria

Meeting any of the following criteria makes one eligible for foodbank assistance, as long as the four key principles are upheld. This list provides examples and is not comprehensive.

1. No recourse to public funds
2. Benefit delay
3. Benefit reduction or suspension (including sanction)
4. Significant disruption to earnings due to ill health or hospitalisation
5. Loss of earnings due to reduced hours, or budgeting issues caused by erratic hours
6. Loss of one income in a previously two-income household
7. Delayed initial wages on starting a new job
8. Exceptional bill or expense for an essential service, e.g.
 - a. Failure of domestic heating system
 - b. Exceptional utility bill (for example, related to severe weather)
 - c. Major repairs to a vehicle that is essential to employment
9. Funeral costs
10. Major dislocation due to accident or natural disaster, e.g.
 - a. Major domestic fire
 - b. Severe flood damage
11. Loss of immediate financial means due to external causes, e.g.
 - a. Victim of robbery, including theft of food supplies
 - b. Credit card fraud
 - c. Abandonment by partner
12. Increased living costs for a specific period e.g.
 - a. Taking on unexpected caring responsibilities
 - b. School holidays requiring additional meals for children normally entitled to free school meals
 - c. Active engagement in a supported transition to a stable domestic life, but who are challenged by the immediate “start-up” costs, e.g.
 - d. Ex-offenders or
 - e. ex-service personnel re-entering civilian life

- f. Victims of domestic abuse re-establishing an independent life
- 13. Clients attempting a transition from homelessness to settled tenancy
- 14. Clients being rehabilitated after concluding a programme to overcome addiction or dependency – alcohol, drugs, nicotine
- 15. Patients returning home after an extended stay in hospital
- 16. Active participation in a recognised debt-reduction programme, with a personal commitment to escape from debt dependency and sustain personal solvency.
- 17. Other causes of destitution (as defined by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation)
- 18. a weekly income after housing costs of
 - a. less than £70,
 - b. plus £30 per additional adult,
 - c. plus £20 per child)

The extent of foodbank assistance is for ***short-term crisis relief***.

In most cases, the client’s immediate crisis will be covered by one or two vouchers, and you should issue these without contacting the food bank.

If the client’s crisis is still not resolved and you wish to issue further vouchers we would simply ask you to use your discretion. If you believe your client needs further help, we will do all that we can to provide this.

An additional number of vouchers, or period of support, may then be agreed upon as part of the broader support that will help 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.

- 19. Some situations in which extended foodbank support may be agreed include:
 - a. continuing benefit delay
 - b. continuing benefit sanction
 - c. continuing destitution
 - d. no recourse to public funds
 - e. awaiting first wage payment
 - f. awaiting settlement of another claim or appeal
 - g. a second distinctly separate crisis (e.g. funeral costs, a second redundancy, or child holiday meal costs on top of an existing qualifying crisis)
 - h. Insufficient income to buy adequate healthy food

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.