



***Power Provision  
fuelbanks **and families*****



# Mission Statement

*With warmth, consideration and respect we deliver immediate solutions and longer term support to local families dealing with the cruel impact poverty has on family life.*

## About fuelbanks and families

*fuelbanks and families was set up in response to the carefully researched needs of local families. We offer a unique combination of services and care that is much more than the sum of its parts.*

*fuelbanks and families meets needs at the right time in the right place and with the right attitude. I am immensely grateful to all who have helped to transform our vision into an effective and practical reality for local families who turn to us at their time of need. And I am proud of the families who have trusted us to come into their lives and have responded with such dignity and generosity, whilst we help them bridge the complex range of crises they often face.*

*We would love you to join us to be part of our journey, whether you are*

- *a potential volunteer who would like to train with us and dedicate some of your time*
- *a fellow charity working with local families*
- *a potential funder investing your money in these families' futures*
- *or a family facing a crisis that together we can make sure is temporary*

*Our report gives more information on the needs we seek to meet, how we go about meeting them and how we have made a difference. We also share insights we have gathered and demonstrate our standards of accountability and potential scalability – as we grow into our second year.*

*This is just the beginning...*

*Jan Stimpson, founder and CEO , fuelbanks and families*



## *The hidden challenges*

Local families we have helped often show vulnerabilities:

- to minor changes or delays in family income (employed, benefits, through sickness)
- to temporary difficulties spiraling into overwhelming crises (cash flow, creditworthiness, indebtedness, high costs of living in London)
- to being exploited economically (high marginal tariffs on energy and phones, for instance)
- to being made to feel helpless and powerless to reverse their fortunes
- to their children being stigmatised at school through inadequate funds to cover, for example, uniforms and school trips

***fuelbanks and families*** are highly effective in offering a temporary bridge and need your support to continue doing so...

But the systemic problems faced by families need urgent resolution by those who have the power to do so. Specifically, we recommend:

- putting childcare within the economic reach of local families
- a timely and just benefit evaluation and payment system
- an end to discrimination against those on prepayment meters through exploitative tariffs
- Ofgem (Office of Gas and Electricity Markets) ensuring the effective redistribution of the multi-million fines levied, to those in greatest need

**The photographs in this report are all authentic, taken with our families, our staff and our volunteers.**

# Establishing the need

## Fuel poverty = Power poverty

### How did we first become aware of families' difficulties?

Early involvement with Wandsworth Foodbank highlighted two things: how many families with dependent children were increasingly in crisis and coming forward for help, and also how many of these families needed 'special' parcels of food to take home – 'special' because they included food that did not need to be cooked. Families lacked the resource and power to cook food for their children...however much they wanted to.



**Dan Frith, Wandsworth Foodbank Manager, says: 'Many of our Foodbank guests have to make difficult choices between heating and eating, particularly when the weather turns colder. We know many will be going home to a very cold house; for others, we need to give food that doesn't necessarily have to be heated up before they can eat it.'**

**Partnering with fuelbanks and families offers a lifeline to families struggling in fuel as well as food poverty, and we're really pleased that their volunteers are working alongside us at our five centres across the borough.'**

**'Fuel poverty is an inadequate description of the hardships faced by families in crisis. There is a broader issue of POWER POVERTY.**

**This leaves caring parents unable to provide the necessities for family life and for their growing children.**

**We often meet hard working, well-intentioned parents who feel completely overwhelmed by the ongoing hardships of poverty.'**

**Aaron Barbour, Chair, fuelbanks and families**

Further research brought to light the hardships families face who are on prepayment meters at home, due to the rental costs and high tariffs – meaning many families live with a system of self-imposed cut off (a 'self imposed' cut off occurs when a household cannot 'feed the meter'). This often results in having to cope with no power at all. Perversely, the poorest families often pay the highest tariffs for their fuel.

Without power, the impact on families is far reaching, and includes: a lack of cooked food for growing children; lack of heating; tough choices on whether or not clothes can be washed and dried; a lack of adequate lighting for school work or everyday use; inability to use basic appliances like irons or kettles; or to charge up a communications lifeline.



## Establishing the need

### Poverty trap

#### What are the most common economic problems that families in poverty face?

Our experience has shown us that hardships can spiral alarmingly quickly. Entering the spiral can be all too easy following job loss, an illness, an accident, the loss of a breadwinner, or benefit errors, delays or changes. We all at times lack true control over what can happen to us – many families, for a variety of reasons, lack resources or back up when things go wrong. The basic costs of running a family are high in London, but those facing a lack of payment choice are often forced to pay premium rates to meet their basic needs. The cost of any historic debt also descends quickly into greater poverty.

Aaron Barbour, Chair, **fuelbanks and families**:

'It was calculated, from the Legal and General report, that within three weeks of losing their usual sources of income the average household in the UK will be reliant upon state benefits, friends, family, the cash economy and predatory payday lenders for financial support.' <sup>1</sup>

**'I'm living in fear. All sorts go through your head.'**

**Mandy, mother of 1**

**'Lots of mums out there want a job, but its £40 a week for breakfast club and after school club. It's never-ending.'** Leah, mother of 2

**'When I was redundant and just before I started my new job there was a whole week where I had no gas. I would cook with the microwave; fill up the bath with the kettle. I wouldn't let my daughter know, it was all just fun and games to her.'** Bobby, mother of 1

**'The gas and electric is a big worry because of the children. If I was by myself I could cope with the cold house.'** Donna, mother of 2

### Impact

#### What's the impact on the families themselves?

It is our experience that parents in poverty feel abnormally high levels of stress, loss of self-esteem and helplessness. Of course, this undermines family life, sometimes very quickly, and further prevents solutions being found to the problems they face.

#### What are the extra stresses for parents?

Parents face difficulties in providing essentials for their growing children: adequate clothes, school uniforms, shoes, for instance. Simple things can become beyond reach – such as school trips, birthday cakes and Christmas presents: quite apart from the complex impact of peer pressure on the vulnerable young. The stark challenges of poverty are often faced within otherwise affluent communities, creating further feelings of inadequacy within the families affected.

Additionally, childcare services are often out of reach for local families. Caring for children, the high cost of childcare and low value of paid employment can present insoluble dilemmas for a single parent, or even dual parents.





*'I want my kids to see you work hard for what you get. But I've just worked 40 hours and for what? By the time bills are paid, I've nothing left.'* Kerry, mother of 2

# Meeting the need

*'At times when it's been so cold and we've had no heating I've had them all hugging in my bed just to keep warm.'* Gabby, mother of 5

*'The baby hasn't been putting on weight as he should be, and the health visitor thinks it's because he's always shivering.'*

Rita, mother of 1

## What types of crises do these local families face?

These families are walking a tightrope. They are vulnerable to any unexpected costs or delays in income or benefit payments. These changes, however small, can easily tip a stable situation over the edge. The aim of **fuelbanks and families** is to provide immediate and timely support to help stricken families regain control of their situation - and prevent the spiraling effect of poverty that is so much harder and more expensive to recover from. Timely support is key.

*'We have so many families struggling to cope, fuelbanks and families is really the beginning of the light at the end of what can often seem like a never ending tunnel.'* Local teacher

## How is your support delivered?

Receiving practical support is often associated with feelings of failure, vulnerability and shame. At **fuelbanks and families** all our staff and volunteers are carefully selected and trained to deliver practical support with warmth, consideration and respect. We also ensure that all our funds are directed to the greatest need in a fair, accountable and professional way.



## Practical help: Fuel Vouchers

### How do the fuel vouchers work?

We are the first and only charity independent of the energy companies that can offer fuel credit directly onto families' prepayment meters.

There are 3 simple steps. In Wandsworth for instance:

**1 Referral** The family in crisis is referred to us via one of 220 agents who can issue both a food voucher and a fuel voucher. These include teachers, social workers, Financial Inclusion Teams, Hospitals and GPs.

**2 Redemption** The family can then take these fuel vouchers to Wandsworth Foodbank Centres running each day throughout the working week, where they will find one of our dedicated fuelbank volunteers. Vouchers can also be redeemed in **fuelbanks and families** office in Battersea. Our trained volunteer will redeem the fuel voucher to the value of £49 and also assess if the families have other immediate or longer term needs. Further help or support will be offered if needed.

**3 Credit** The family then take the generated bar code slip directly to any PayPoint outlet. £49 is then transferred directly to their prepayment meter, clearing any debt and adding credit to both gas and electricity as needed.



The removal of debt also reduces the punitive high rates the families are forced to pay.

## Practical help: Advice

### What type of advice do you offer?

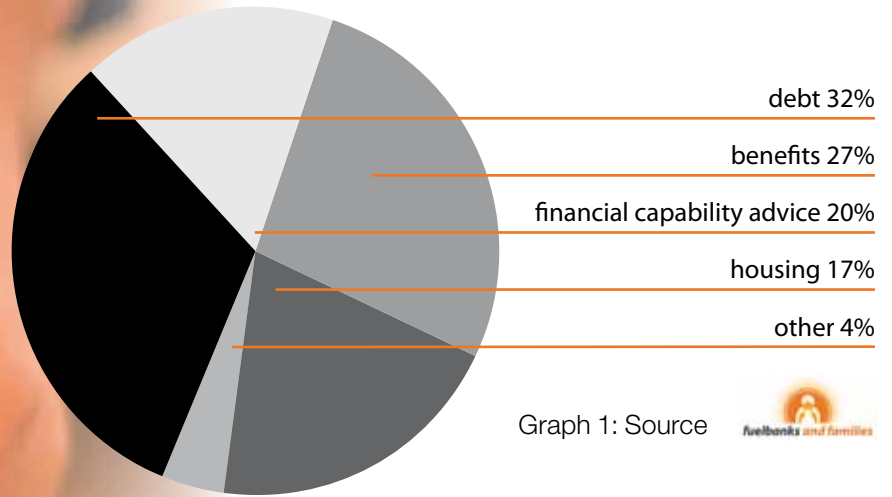
Advice is offered in areas where it's needed – principally debt, housing and benefits.

### How is the advice accessed?

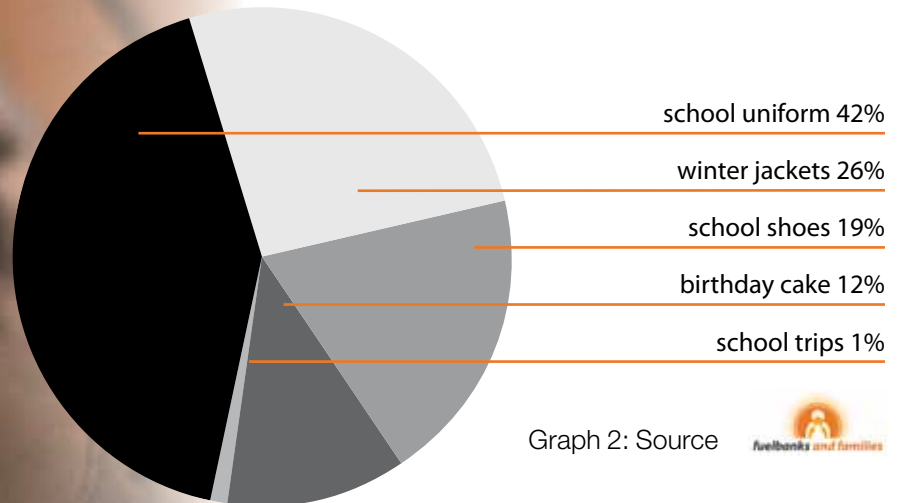
Through an independent, confidential agency, Centre 70. We have a dedicated resource and personal advisor for our families that provides one-to-one support without long waiting lists and with ease of access.



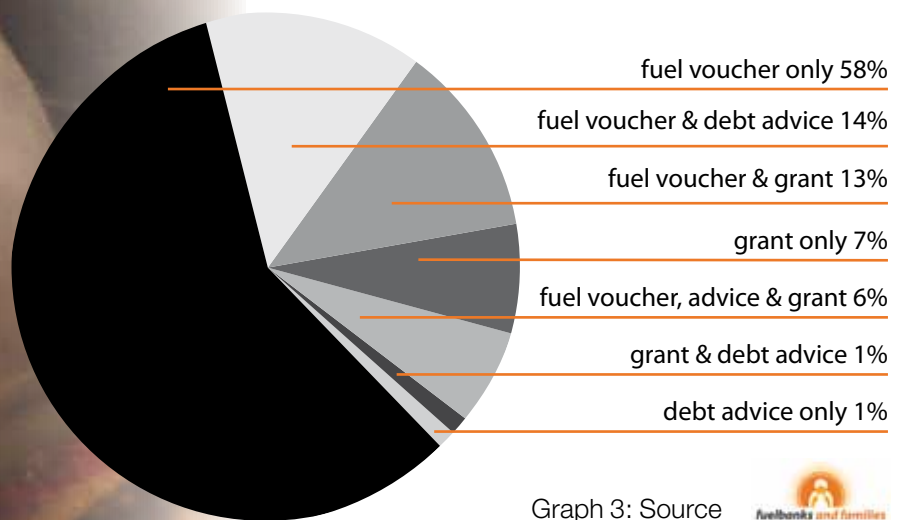
## Type of financial advice provided for our families



## Grant type



## Service takeup by our families



# Practical Help: Grants



## What is the scope of the grants offered?

For families already considered to be in crisis, grants can be provided to cover essential costs, which are often disproportionately expensive. We purchase and provide items that help children get off to a good start including: compulsory items of school uniform, comfortable school shoes, winter coats and school trips. These are highly visual differences in any child's experience if they are lacking. Timely provision contributes to inclusion and the avoidance of bullying.

***'The uniform grants work in different ways. It brings relief to parents who are struggling to provide, and worried about their children going to school cold. For the children it means they can go to school feeling proud and confident amongst their friends.'*** Lauren Scott, *fuelbanks and families*

## Is there anything else that became important?

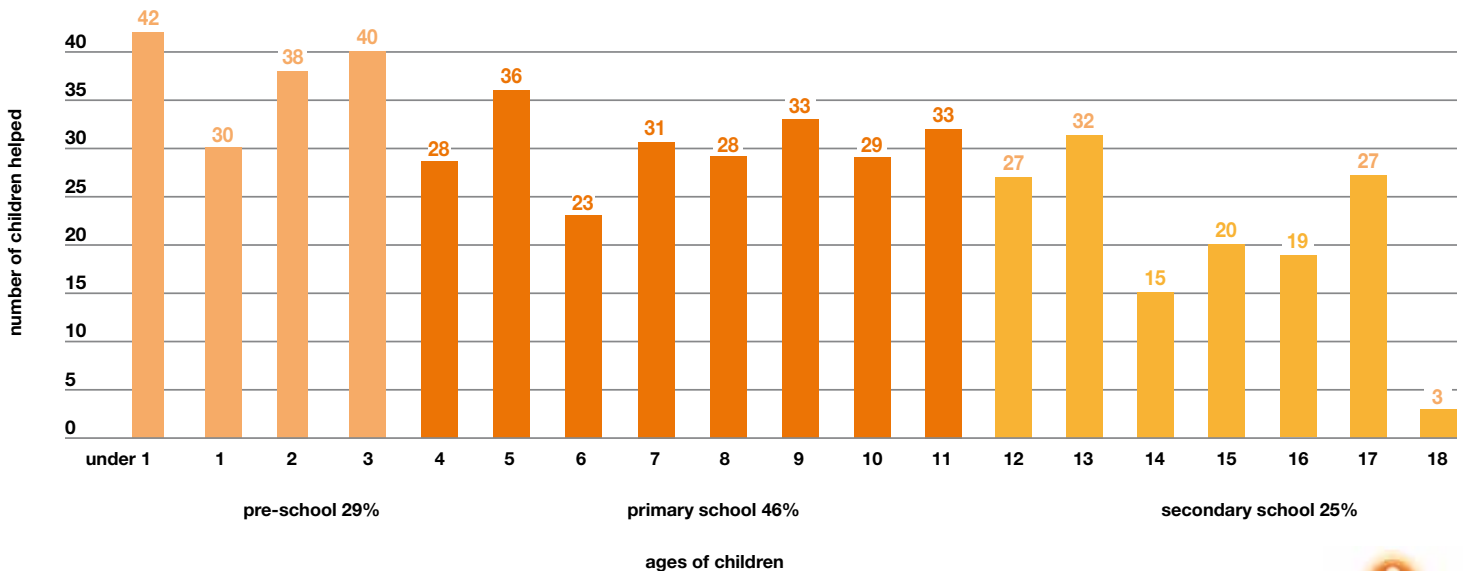
Dedicated volunteers bake special birthday cakes for a child's birthday who otherwise may miss out. An example of a small token of love and care for the parents to provide for their children that can be immensely significant in hard times.

Within the data we often see families take up a combination of multiple services we offer due to the complexities of poverty and the far reaching effects on family life.

## Number of children we have helped

# 525

## Number of children we have helped, by age



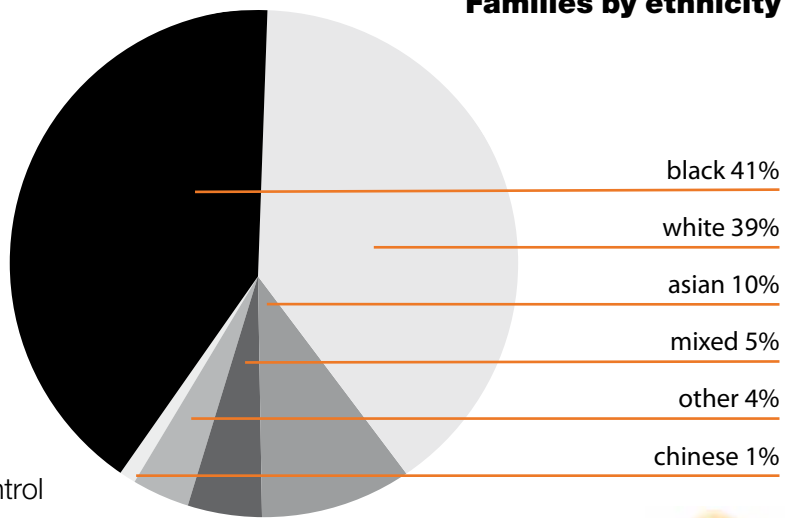
Graph 4: Source fuelbanks and families

# Outcomes

## Who are we helping?

**fuelbanks and families** supports the full range of local families. This includes single and dual parents, diverse ethnicities and most often families with primary school age children.

We work with families who find themselves in crisis. Our tailored and respectful responses provide them with hope as well as practical solutions. Combined with their own determination, our help often puts them back in control of their situation.



Graph 6: Source



## What are our outcomes?

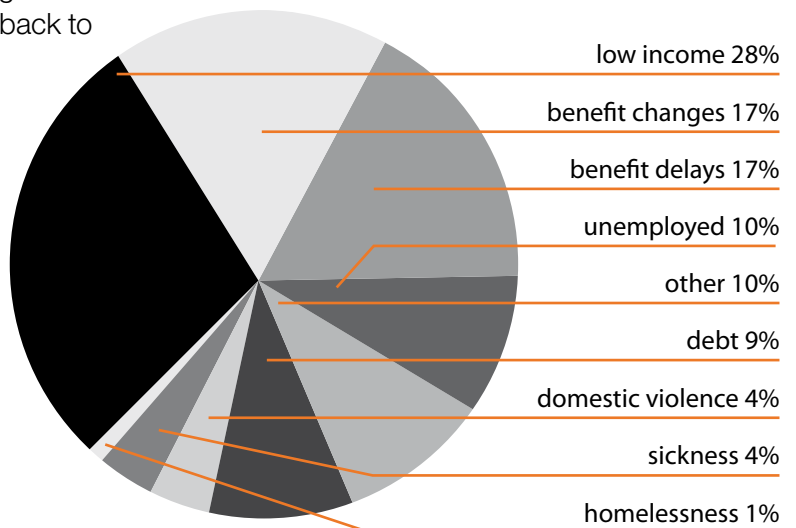
We have worked with 251 families in our first year. We ensured all our processes are highly accountable from vouchers to advice and grants. We have proven that our model of aid is viable and maximizes positive outcomes for the families we are working with. The vast majority of our families not only report real change in their own circumstances, but many already want to give back to **fuelbanks and families** in order to help others.

## Proportion of families whose circumstances have improved since using our services

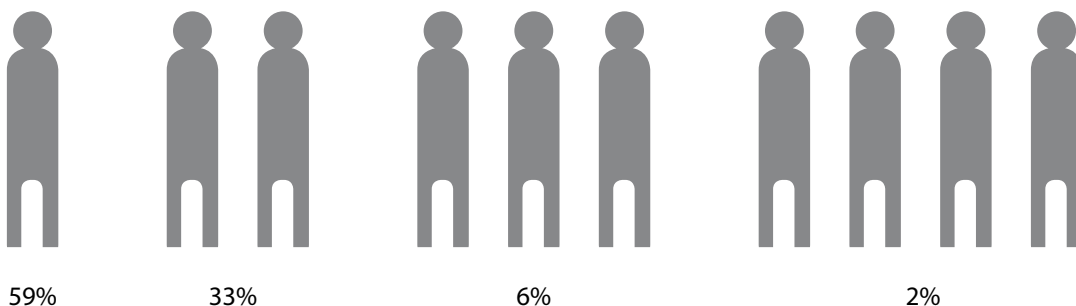
# 81%

Graph 8: Source Survey

## Principal reasons families are falling into crisis



Graph 7: Source



## Adults per household

Graph 5: Source



# Outcomes

## Case studies

These case studies highlight the range of challenges our families face.

**fuelbanks and families** make a significant difference to the life circumstances of local families.

### Redundancy

#### Voucher

**fuelbanks and families** gave a fuel voucher to Bobby, the sole parent of a 5 year old daughter, and a full-time teacher. The voucher enabled Bobby to bridge a temporary crisis created by an unexpected redundancy from full-time to part-time work. Her enforced notice period was a minimum of six weeks on the part -time salary. A new full-time position also had to be secured. When we met her she was both struggling to maintain the essentials of family life and avoid spiralling into debt. She had already accumulated a debt on her prepayment meter, which she was required to pay back at a high tariff. Our £49 voucher enabled her to stay afloat and protect her daughter from unnecessary stress. She has now successfully found a new full-time position.

### Rental charges

#### Voucher

**fuelbanks and families** enabled Louise, mother of 2, to regain control of her finances. She had worked full time for local government for a number of years but had suddenly lost her job. She had managed well for a number of months. At her time of crisis she came to **fuelbanks and families**. She explained how carefully she managed her family's finances. She had prepared to bath her children in the morning before school by leaving 49p on the meter, turning lights out and going to bed early. When this was taken overnight by rental charges on the meter she felt defeated. Our £49 fuel voucher allowed her to get on top of her meter costs for several weeks and she has maintained financial stability since.

### Rehousing

#### Voucher

**fuelbanks and families** provided Lloyd, a newly-single parent of 5 children, with a fuel voucher to help with rehousing. Both Lloyd and his children were victims of domestic abuse and he was desperate to provide a calm family environment following this. In order to achieve this he had temporarily given up work and was moving into a new home, which in addition was creating financial stress. Our temporary relief contributed to the calm environment that was so important to him and his children.



## Illness

### Voucher

***fuelbanks and families provided Sophia, mother of 2, with essential credit on her prepayment meter when she was signed off sick from work. After 24 years being self sufficient and working as a hairdresser Sophia was diagnosed with a terminal illness. When she came to us she was not receiving help and waiting for potential benefits to be assessed. She was having to choose between heating and lighting her home. We were able to power her home to an adequate level.***

## Eviction

### Debt

***fuelbanks and families provided dedicated financial advice to Allison, a single parent of 3, which prevented her and her children from being evicted from their home. Her genuine ill health had resulted in her being eligible for Employment and Support Allowance, but rent arrears built up while this claim was being assessed. Repayments of this debt had been set at a level so high (£100) that it took her entire Employment and Support Allowance at source. We negotiated with the Housing Office to reduce the rent arrear payment to £3.80 a week, enabling her to both stay in her home and manage her finances for her family going forward.***

## Employment

### Grant

***fuelbanks and families enabled Hassan, a father of 2, to get back into employment. Hassan had previously worked as a security officer but his licence had expired when he had to care for his sick mother. Our grant paid for his Security Industry Authority (SIA) card and Hassan is now happily and confidently back in full time employment.***





# Outcomes

## Case studies

The variety of ways *fuelbanks and families* make a significant difference to the life circumstances of local families.

### School shoes

#### Grant

*fuelbanks and families* helped mum, Stella, buy some new school shoes for her 14 year old son. Stella managed both her family and finances very well but a benefit delay had made it impossible to buy her son new shoes. He was wearing shoes 2 sizes too small for him. Although other support was available this was all Stella asked for and was sufficient for her to continue coping alone – both she and her son were delighted with the essential purchase.

### School trip

#### Grant

*fuelbanks and families* paid for Karen's son to go on a school trip. Finances were extremely tight following an error of overpayment in her working tax credit by HMRC. Repayment meant this £15 school trip to a Shakespeare play had become an unaffordable luxury. Enabling her son to join the school trip was not only educational but allowed him the opportunity to be included with all his friends.

### Starting school

#### Grant

*fuelbanks and families* provided compulsory school uniform to enable Sandra's son, Callum aged 11, to start secondary school. Callum had passed the entrance exam with flying colours and Sandra felt dismayed that she could not pay for the extensive list of school uniform required. She had requested a payment scheme over a number of weeks but the school had rejected this and would not release any of the school uniform until it was all paid for. When *fuelbanks and families* met Sandra she was facing the possibility of Callum having to start at a different school. Our grant ensured Callum started on the first day of term at a school in which he is now thriving.

*'Families find themselves travelling for over an hour just to ensure their children have continuity of school life. Often the children are very young. In some cases, this means waking a 5 year old up before 5:30am to get them washed, fed and on public transport across London, sometimes involving three or more changes along the way. By the time they arrive at school the children are exhausted from the journey and emotionally drained from the constant worry they see in their parents.'*

*Deputy Head of a local primary school*

## Travelling costs

Grant

***fuelbanks and families*** paid for a Travelcard for a month for a mother of 3 (8, 12 and 13 years). This enabled Annie to take her children to school on the train. She had been temporarily rehoused miles from her youngest's school due to domestic violence. The four hour roundtrip on the bus had been creating further health issues for her diabetic son as well as considerable stress for herself. This break from a harsh routine gave both Annie and her son the respite required.

## Grandparents hidden carers

Grant

***fuelbanks and families*** helped Maureen by giving her a fuel voucher so that she could heat her home and recover from pneumonia. She had taken over full time care of her grandsons after her daughter had been placed in an alcohol rehabilitation centre. As a pensioner, Maureen was managing on a low income and was unable to keep up with fuel payments on her prepayment meter. She had also been diagnosed with bowel cancer.



# Feedback

## What's the feedback on our first year?

The feedback has been immensely positive from our partners, referral agents and most importantly our families.

We have worked with care and consideration to ensure all our services are carefully tested in our first year before expanding or advertising to reach more families. This combination of careful stewardship and effective delivery has become a feature of our operations.

**WARMTH** *'Been brilliant, it helped me get back on my feet when I was in dire straits. You were more approachable for help, it was more personal... and there was no judgment. A brilliant service that made me feel comfortable and at ease.'* Tricia, mother of 3

*'It was a huge help and everyone at the organisation was lovely, it was like a family environment.'*  
Chit, father of 2

## Independent research from our partner, Wandsworth Foodbank

When Wandsworth Foodbank asked their referral agents the following question:

**When you give a Foodbank voucher to a client in crisis what, if any, emergency financial support options do you also refer people to?**

- the majority chose **fuelbanks and families** above other services.
- 96.3% of referral agents found **fuelbanks and families** to be helpful or extremely helpful.

### Referral agents said:

*'It is sad that the majority of people I have referred are either in low-paid work or desperate to be in work. fuelbanks and families recognises that people living below the poverty line will not be able to afford to eat properly and heat their homes. One of my pupils said she was asked by her mum to make a choice between packed lunch the next day or warmth for the evening. She said the family often went to bed early to keep warm.'*

*'Offering support with fuel is absolutely essential. Not many services can offer this much needed, direct, immediate support and this makes such a big difference in crisis periods.'*

*'This service is invaluable to our families (those who know about it and are offered the service) the staff are friendly and non-judgemental.'*

*'We're incredibly grateful for the generosity dedication and kindness shown by fuelbanks and families ... and we look forward to working together to help local families in crisis in the year ahead'* Sarah Chapman, Co-founder, Wandsworth Foodbank.

As a new charity we felt this was strong validation.

**CONSIDERATION** *'When you are working it is hard to understand the "What ifs"...it becomes impossible. The meter is very expensive to feed and I have to choose between heat and food and light. It can become devastating. Fuelbanks and families were a lifesaver, they literally took the pressure off my family and me. And honestly, you don't know, the help you gave me was immeasurable. You are a God-send, absolute angels, very caring and going against the odds to help me.'*

*Sophia, mother of 2*

*'It has given me a bit more confidence and has allowed me to become a bit more self sufficient'*

*Alannah, mother of 2*

*'Keep on offering the service to vulnerable people like ourselves.'*

*Lisa, mother of 1*



### How do families feel about our services?

It is extremely important to us as a charity that we make a significant difference to how a family is coping with the crisis they are in. This goes beyond a simple take up of practical services and includes the differences in how they felt about the crisis they were in both before and after **fuelbanks and families** helped.

The following graphs show the change for the better in all the families we spoke to. A score of 1 indicates highly negative emotions and 5 the opposite.

### Giving back

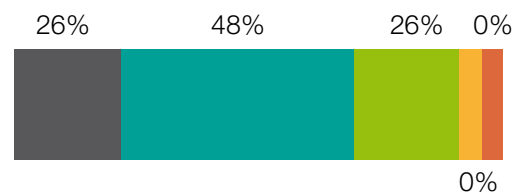
#### What was the most gratifying outcome after families had been helped?

We have been humbled by the generosity of our families, both in their clarity and honesty in taking only what they need, and often offering to give back to the charity once they were through the crisis and back on their feet. This has included one recipient becoming a trained, outstanding and regular volunteer.

**fuelbanks and families** delivers what they promise – with GENUINE warmth, compassion and respect – combined with careful stewardship of its resources.

**How our families felt before & after our service on a scale of 1 to 5**

**before**

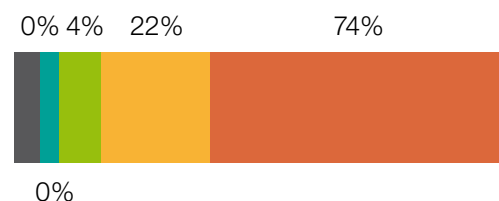


desperate



hopeful

**after**



Graphs 9 & 10: Source  Survey



**RESPECT** *'You treated me like a human being. Your help gave me my confidence back and I have managed to find a job.'*

**Hassan, father of 1**

*'It made a big difference in providing for my family and was reassuring as a mother.'*

**Naomi, mother of 2**

## How can you help?

- **Larger donors: Join our Funding Network**  
You are invaluable and essential for our ongoing work.
- **Make an online donation**  
Every penny donated goes directly to the families we work with.
- **Volunteer your time**  
Join our strong group of volunteers and receive our training and support.

[www.fuelbanksandfamilies.com](http://www.fuelbanksandfamilies.com)

Giving is one of the most rewarding things we can ever do:

***'The contact point in helping our families is about looking to their strengths. It is responsive and immediate support in a crisis, delivered with respect and care... that enables families to stop a downward spiral and get back on their feet.'***

**Jan Stimpson, founder and CEO, fuelbanks and families**





## Thank you

We would like to thank the team at Wandsworth Foodbank, particularly Dan Frith, Sarah Chapman and Rachel Saebi. Your dedication to helping those in crisis and willingness to go above and beyond is so greatly valued.

We would like to thank our partners at Centre 70 who provide such a worthwhile service and enable us to tackle some of the complex issues our families face.

Thank you to Joshua Brown for his sensitive and respectful photography and to our families who enabled the authenticity of all the photos used.

To our wonderful volunteers including Rebecca Ravic, Sean Vagges, Louise Elderman and Philip Bradley – thank you for your commitment to **fuelbanks and families**. Your dedication to the charity and the warmth that you bring makes you valued members of the team.

To our funders and to everyone who has donated, your contributions are vital to **fuelbanks and families**, and allow us to continue providing support to families in crisis.

A special thank you to our main donor who has been with us from the beginning and generously chose to cover all our essential start-up costs. This allows every penny donated to go directly to the families needing support. We are genuinely grateful to all our trustees: Karen Millen, Jonathan Franks, Simon Wheatley and our Chair, Aaron Barbour.

Thank you to the referral agents who take the time to issue the **fuelbanks and families** vouchers to families in crisis.

Our thanks also go to our supporters and partners who we worked with over our first year including: all those at the Katherine Low Settlement, Anita Richards, Battersea Power Station, Bob Pearce, Dairo Vargas, Free Cakes for Kids, HUE, Linda Jansone, Linsey McFadden, Lourita Pusey, Mike Harle, Penwortham Primary School, Rachel Gregory (CAP), Ryan Mees, School Uniforms Direct, Simon Kelly, South West London Vineyard, Suzanne Perkins, Wandsworth Citizens Advice Bureau, Wandsworth Law Centre and West Norwood Foodbank.



## Prepayment meters

- More than half a million prepayment meters have been forcefully installed in the last 6 years.<sup>2</sup>
- Households with prepayment meters pay on average £250 more a year in energy bills.<sup>3</sup>
- Installation charges per meter is up to £179.96. The range of removal charges is up to £160.00.<sup>4</sup>
- It is estimated that across the UK, 259,000 (54%) prepayment users reported self-disconnecting to some extent.<sup>5</sup>
- Standing charges are applied to the meter each day taking up credit or creating debt, regardless of use.

## Child poverty

- 3.7 million children in the UK are living in poverty.<sup>4</sup> That's over a quarter of all children.
- 27% of children in Wandsworth are living in poverty, and 34% in Lambeth.<sup>7</sup>
- There is a link between poverty, embarrassment, stigma and bullying.<sup>8</sup>
- Families spend on average around £800 per child per year on school costs. This includes uniforms and sports kits, meals, travel costs and school trips.<sup>9</sup>
- By GCSE level there is a 28% gap between children receiving free school meals and their peers who do not, in terms of their grades.<sup>10</sup>

## Inadequate housing

- 96% of fuel poor homes in the UK are poorly insulated, giving an estimated figure of 21 million homes being below a Band C on the Energy Performance Certificate.<sup>11</sup>
- 77% of households in fuel poverty are classed as vulnerable, that is one containing children, the elderly, or someone with a long-term illness or disability.<sup>12</sup>
- Children are particularly susceptible to developing respiratory conditions from living in damp, mouldy homes.<sup>13</sup>

## Notes

1 Legal and General (2014) Deadline to the Breadline

2 BBC (2015) Ofgem to investigate 'forcibly installed' pre-pay meters

3 Osborne, H (2015) Households with prepayment meters pay up to £250 more in energy bills

4 Ofgem (2015) Prepayment review: Understanding supplier charging practices and barriers to switching

5 CAP (2015) The poor pay more: Prepayment meters and self-disconnection

6 End Child Poverty UK (2016) *Money Matters*

7 Hirsh, Valadez, D. L (2014) Compilation of child poverty local indicators

8 The Children's Commission on Poverty (2014) At What Cost? Exposing the impact of poverty on school life

9 Ibid

10 Child Poverty Action Group (2016) Child Poverty in the UK: A few facts

11 End Fuel Poverty (no date) End fuel poverty

12 NEA (2015) Fuel poverty statistics

13 Christman, Russell, B., Hannah (2016) 'Readjusting the political thermostat: Fuel poverty and human rights in the UK'

14 BBC (2016) Cold homes causes 9,000 deaths last winter

15 DECC (2015) Annual Fuel Poverty Statistics Report

16 Howard, R. (2015) Warmer Homes: Improving fuel poverty and energy efficiency in the UK

17 Ofgem (2016) Investigations and enforcement data

18 Competition and Markets Authority (2016) Energy Market Investigation, Summary of provisional decision on remedies

## Fuel poverty

- In 2000 the Warm Homes and Energy Conservation Act was established to eradicate fuel poverty within the UK by 2016.
- The definition of fuel poverty has changed (2013) reducing households that are included. The government used to define a 'household as fuel poor if they spent more than 10% of their income on heating their home.' However, in 2013 they changed the criteria to 'whether heating a home to a decent standard would leave the household below the poverty line.'<sup>14</sup>
- Latest figures tell us 4.5 million households are in fuel poverty in the UK.<sup>15</sup>
- 49% of all fuel poor households in England have at least one member in work, that is over 1.1 million households.<sup>16</sup>

## Cost of power and energy companies

- The big 6 energy suppliers have been fined £88m by Ofgem since January 2014 alone. This could be reinvested in the most vulnerable families.<sup>17</sup>
- A price cap on prepayment meters is to be introduced until 2020 following an investigation by the Competition and Markets Authority.<sup>18</sup>



## Methodology

The data represented in graphs numbered 1 to 7 represents the quantitative analysis of information gathered from all 251 families that we have worked with this year. There are three access points at which we collect this information: when generating a fuel voucher, when receiving specialist dedicated advice and when a grant application has been requested. We have ensured that all data remains anonymous and confidential and is used only to demonstrate the themes of importance.

We also chose to follow up with all our families to review their progress and gain feedback on our

service provided to them. We did this through a phone survey where 52.6% of our families had a workable phone number as a contact point, a higher percent than email (6%). We called all families with phones and successfully spoke to 20.5% of the families. Resulting data is visualized in graphs numbered 8 to 10.

Any quotes or case studies in this report have all been taken from genuine local families that we have helped. However, we have chosen to give pseudonyms to all contributors to protect both our parents and their children.

# families in crisis

Referrals: prepayment meter,  
child 18 or under living at home  
with parent or grandparent

220 referral agencies shared  
with Wandsworth Foodbank

Other charitable referrals in  
Battersea and Wandsworth



Meeting our trained volunteer

**Fuel voucher**  
Immediate relief directly  
onto prepayment meters

**Discretionary educational funds**  
Children's essential education costs:  
• compulsory school uniform  
• school shoes  
• winter jackets  
Parent training opportunities  
to boost job prospects

**Generalist advice & support**  
Debt, housing & benefit  
Dedicated one-to-one resource  
(Centre 70)

**Counselling**  
Year 2 plan

**Birthday cakes**  
(Free Cakes for Kids UK)

# families regaining their power

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