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Westminster's First Foodbank Opens to Help Local People in Crisis

Westminster, London, 23 November 2011 – Yesterday, parliamentarians, council members and local business leaders gathered in Westminster to mark the official opening of the Westminster Foodbank. Run by [Westminster Chapel](#), in conjunction with the [Trussell Trust](#), the Foodbank will provide emergency food parcels to Westminster's poorest families.

The twice-weekly service is being funded by the evangelical church, based on Buckingham Gate, Westminster, and staffed by volunteers from its 300-strong membership base, with on-going support from the Trussell Trust, the Salisbury-based founders of the Foodbank network.

Speaking at the launch, Councillor **Colin Barrow**, Leader of Westminster City Council, said, "It's great to see our community pulling together as one to make a real difference to the lives of struggling families. We are constantly working to give Westminster residents that extra helping hand, and we know, with the winter months approaching, this Foodbank will play a pivotal role in providing for those most at risk."

John Glen MP, Member of Parliament for Salisbury, where the Trussell Trust was founded said, "I have huge admiration for the work of the Trussell Trust, and I'm delighted to see this newest Foodbank opening in Westminster. This new service will be invaluable in helping people through some extremely difficult times, and I encourage local people to donate food generously to the Foodbank as others are doing across the country."

Clients are referred to Foodbanks for a variety of reasons including redundancy, benefit delay, low income, ill health, domestic abuse, benefit reductions and debt. Food bags contain three days of nutritionally balanced, non-perishable foods such as tinned fruit, vegetables, meat and fish as well as pasta, cereal, UHT milk, sauces, tea, long-life juice.

Foodbank clients can receive a maximum of three Foodbank vouchers in a row (each voucher can be redeemed for at least three days food). Clients can receive up to nine vouchers per year, although longer term support is available in exceptional circumstances.

The Foodbank store cupboards sit in specially-converted rooms in the church, and over the past two months, volunteers, members of the public and local schools have helped to fill these rooms with enough food to officially open the Foodbank.

On October 1st, a team of volunteers spent a day collecting outside Sainsbury's Market in Pimlico, receiving over 628 kilograms of food from members of the public. Store Manager, **Justin Sheppard** said, "Sainsbury's is delighted to be partnering with the Westminster Foodbank. We've been thrilled with the generosity of our shoppers and their willingness to get involved. We think the Foodbank is a fantastic initiative, and one which we will continue to support as part of our commitment to making a positive difference to our community."

Donations have also been received from: Buckaroochies Parent & Toddler Group, St Vincent's Primary School, Burdett-Coutts Primary School, Methodist Central Hall, All Souls Clubhouse, as well as Westminster Chapel members.

Current voucher holders and referral organisations include: L&Q Housing Trust, SHP, Westminster Mind and Westminster Mind - Portgate Support Centre.

ENDS

About Westminster Chapel:

Westminster Chapel is a Free Evangelical church, positioned for many generations in the heart of London. The Foodbank is one of many initiatives run by the church, which is made up of a multi-ethnic and diverse group of people of all ages. For more information, visit www.westminsterchapel.org.uk. Westminster Chapel is an 'excepted' charity through the FIEC (Reg. Charity #263354).

About the Trussell Trust:

The Trussell Trust is a Christian charity that works with local communities to launch practical projects combatting poverty and marginalisation in the UK and Bulgaria. Trussell Trust foodbanks across the UK are experiencing high demand due to the current economic situation. Numbers of people fed by foodbanks rose by 50% this year: in 2010-11 61,468 people (including over 20,000 children) were given emergency food compared to 41,000 in 2009-10. The Trussell Trust has launched a new foodbank every week in 2011 and aims to launch over 200 UK foodbanks by 2013, feeding an estimated 144,000 people. Foodbanks are operating from Cornwall to Inverness, with 30 projects in London so far. For more information, visit www.trusselltrust.org.