

***Hope For The Best
Prepare For The Worst***

A guide to preparing for hardship

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Hope For The Best, Prepare For The Worst

We live in very scary times. Even without the shadow of a Brexit No-Deal scenario, we have already endured several years of austerity, falling living standards, struggling to make the pennies stretch. The common folk are ill-prepared for the possibility of food shortages, not to mention the poor people who are already struggling to survive in the face of Universal Credit and needlessly stringent benefits assessments. People are already going hungry.

From the beginning of austerity, we were encouraged by our government to be “in this together” (as galling as that is considered that they exclude themselves from this spirit), but the last decade has seen more division in our society. The EU referendum put a tonne of salt in an already nasty wound. We have never been a more divided country.

But if we see a fall in food supplies, only the very rich will be able to ride out the storm. We may all see different levels of hardship, but it will affect us all one way or another. And that’s why we need to look around us, and start planning. Think about the worst case scenario, and make sure that ourselves, our families, friends and communities will not be caught out if the unthinkable happens.

What about trying for the best outcome?

Stopping this national crisis is important. We are fighting on many fronts: against the government’s blatant disregard for the poor in our society, against the mistreatment of our disabled and vulnerable, for the future of our children, against No-Deal Brexit. There is no reason to give up trying to fight for a better future. But things may take time to change, and we are up against increasingly difficult circumstances. It’s becoming harder for common sense to shine through. It doesn’t do us any good to throw everything we have at our work but have no back-up plan.

Preparing for hard times is not an admission of defeat, it is a balanced outlook and it makes sense. We must be ready for anything. And what if we succeed, and the worst *doesn’t* happen? Then we have lost little. The stores we have can be used for many other things:

1. Donating even more to our food banks.
2. Slowly using up our stores, saving money on our groceries for a while.
3. A good set of camping gear if we want to get outdoors.
4. Learning greener ways of living and improving our environment.

Preparing for the worst may seem difficult, time and money consuming and tedious, but it could literally save lives, and there is no downside. Just sensible stores and skills for whatever we end up facing. It may sound all very cliché, but it’s absolutely imperative. Hope for the best, prepare for the worst.

About my family and community

In our family four people have a diagnosis of autism, and two more are currently being re-assessed- including myself. I am the most able out of the six of us. It means everything to me that the people I care for, and care about, have what they need in times of hardship. Our security could be taken away from us at any time, especially as disability resources continue to shrink. We have always tried our best to give back in any way we can- donating regularly, speaking to people across the country in similar situations, building a small but tight community online.

I've experienced the benefits system for 13 years, made applications on behalf of myself and family, supported people through assessments, mandatory considerations, appeals, tribunals. I've experienced debt, lack of housing, lack of food and heating. But I've always tried to help in any way I can, as I feel that we really are all in this together. Especially as crises have worsened over the last decade.

The advice in this guide is researched to the best of my ability, and I will always keep my lines of communication open if anyone has anything they wish to amend or add, or if they have questions.

Twitter: @IncorrectEn

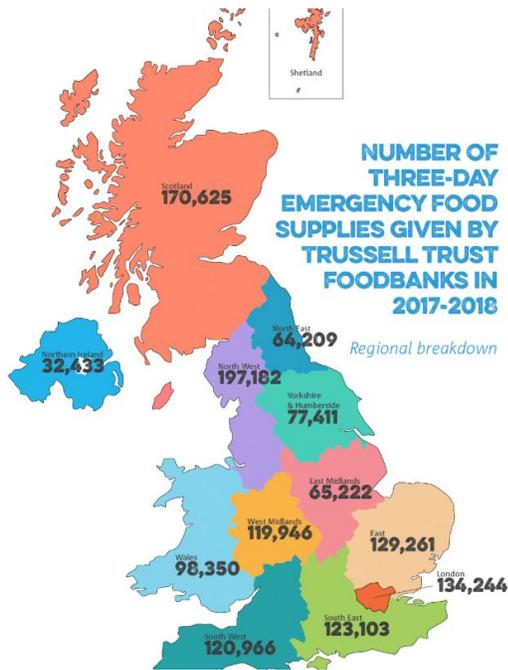
Email: samanthajraaphorst@gmail.com

“Your local councils, NHS trusts, and elected commissioners are responsible for ensuring the core functions and emergency services – including care, welfare, hospitals, pharmacies, and medical centres, policing, fire and rescue, and schools - are co-ordinated and continue their operations, even in the event of a major emergency. These services are already under stress due to austerity in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis and may not meet the additional demands of a national or severe local crisis situation. In the case of Brexit, it is unlikely service provision would meet capacity of demand.” - James Patrick, Getting Ready Together PDF

Food Banks

Here in the UK people are already going hungry, and that's before the disruptions that Brexit will bring.

The number of three-day emergency food supply packages given to people in crisis by Trussell Trust foodbanks in the financial year 2017-2018 was 1,332,952. This was a 13% increase on the previous year, part of a consistent increase since 2013. We can attribute a lot of this to austerity and more punitive benefits assessments and sanctions, as well as an increasing number of people in work who cannot make ends meet from what they earn.



NUMBER OF THREE-DAY EMERGENCY FOOD SUPPLIES GIVEN BY TRUSSELL TRUST FOODBANKS

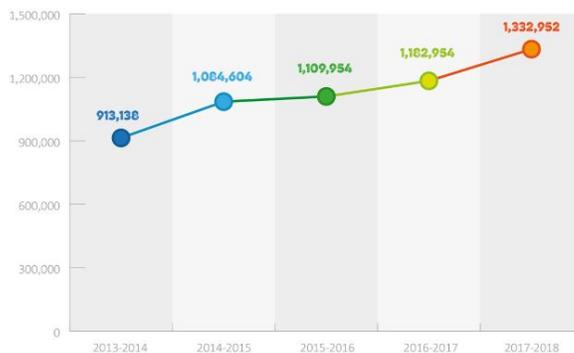


Figure 1&2: End of year stats- The Trussell Trust

Thankfully there are many ways that we can help. Our food banks have had no choice but to grow, multiply and expand to meet the overwhelming need as a result of government policy. They also need to be well equipped for the increase in pressure that will potentially come via Brexit, and a good habit of donating foods and money will ensure that anyone unable to make their own stockpiles won't go without.

Here is a list of ways that you can help:

- As well as directly going to the nearest food bank using the Trussell Trust guide (see index) to find one close by, many supermarkets also do a tinned/dry food and other donations basket. Drop a couple of things in there during your shop if you can.
- The Trussell Trust also do a direct donations service. Either a one-off donation as and when, or setting up a direct debit to give a little each month or whatever. Great for people who don't get out very much.
- If you use Amazon regularly you can put "smile." in front of the address. This allows you to choose a charity for Amazon to donate to on your behalf. There are many local food services that are available if you want to go local. Stick it to the tax dodgers- [smile.amazon.co.uk](https://www.smile.amazon.co.uk) (I am currently donating to Neruka's Soul Food Soup Kitchen in Leeds every time I make an Amazon purchase).
- Ocado also do online vouchers you can use to donate, and Ocado will consult the food banks to see what they need specifically and use your donation to help out (see index).
- Lastly, however your neighbours voted (there will be no room for politics) keep an eye on the poorer ones. They might need you to at the very least check on them, and maybe give them a tin or two, especially if the local food bank is out of their reach.
- Check out the recipe books by Jack Monroe (cookingonabootstrap.com and reputable bookshops have copies) and consider buying a copy to donate to your local food bank. The recipes are incredibly valuable for making the tins and jars on offer stretch to nutritious, wholesome meals, and having hard copies at the food banks will help those without access to the internet.

Thinking About What You Need

Starting to prepare for difficult circumstances can be overwhelming. It's not just about tinned food- there are many resources that people take for granted each day that could suddenly become scarce. Having a checklist of things that you use each day can help to make the task much easier.

If you can, grab some paper and a pen and make a note of the things you and your family have in your household that you make the most use of. Making sure that you prioritise these will help to retain a sense of familiarity during difficult times. Crisis point is not the best time to try and make large changes, especially if you have dependents that find comfort in the predictable.

The lists below contain examples of the most useful things to consider for your stock. It is not extensive- you can adjust it to suit the needs of your family and your budget. Also please bear in mind that these supplies can be built up gradually with some good planning (see next chapter).

Food

When we think of emergency supplies, we tend to think of tinned foods as they have a long shelf-life and can be prepared with little or no water, or in some cases without needing to be cooked at all. But there are other good options that don't need to be expensive and can still be eaten with little to no preparation. If you can, it might help to spend a little bit of time in your grocer's or supermarket checking which foods can be stored easily. Remember to consider what your family and dependents will be willing to eat and try and include at least some of that in your checklist.

- Tinned, pre-cooked vegetables and potatoes
- Tinned baked beans and tinned beans and pulses
- Tinned fruit
- Tinned pre-cooked meats such as spam, hot dogs, tinned fish such as tuna
- Tinned complete meals such as soup
- Packet soups
- Pasta, rice, instant noodles, grains, jars of sauce to go with these
- Long life bread products such as tortillas, crackers, plain biscuits
- Milk powder or UHT milk, milk alternatives that keep longer such as soy, oat
- Hard cheese, cheese spread in a tube
- Fruit jams, marmalade, honey
- Cooking oil
- Porridge oats, breakfast cereals
- Nuts, seeds, cereal or granola bars, chocolate
- Coffee, tea
- Pet food (both dry and wet), pet snacks

Water

In some ways making sure there is a good supply of clean water is more expensive and time-consuming than food supplies. Emergency bottled water can really help if there is an issue with the water supply, and although it is expensive it is the most convenient option. Try to allow for roughly 2 litres of drinking water per person per day. Other water-saving strategies are outlined in James Patrick's *Getting Ready Together* (see index for link, or email me if you struggle to find it) and include:

- Storing tap water in tightly lidded bottles or containers, in a dark cool place
- Filling bottles of water almost (not completely) to the top and storing them in the freezer
- Filling large containers with water for washing, not drinking
- Having a supply of sterilising tablets if possible (these are in the baby section of your supermarket)

Health and Hygiene

These items tend to be lying around people's homes, desks, bags, cars and so on. But they still need to be considered for your stock, especially if a trip to the supermarket becomes too difficult. It's good to try and build a basic first-aid kit if possible, and it doesn't need to be expensive.

- First aid supplies- plasters, bandages, gauze dressings, antiseptic cream, tweezers, baby scissors, safety pins, thermometer
- Disposable plastic gloves
- Baby wipes (these are usually cheaper than other hygiene wipes), antibacterial hand gel
- Painkillers such as paracetamol, ibuprofen
- Toothpaste and mouthwash
- Toilet roll
- Nappies, sanitary products (I have been lucky enough to afford to try washable sanitary pads, but this isn't going to be suitable for everyone)
- Cat litter

Staying Warm

Many people already struggling with poverty become ill or die because of a lack of heating. It's easy to underestimate the importance of staying warm, but please remember to bear it in mind. Some people may be able to afford back-up heaters and cooking stoves, but some will have a much tighter budget. Here are some ideas to keep you and the family warm in case of difficulty.

- Have a supply of warm clothing, such as outdoor clothes, gloves, scarves, hats. Blankets and sleeping bags are also useful. Dress in layers if possible. Stock up on cheap, warm clothing from charity shops and cheap outlets.

- If you can, get some extra rugs to line the floor. Throws are also useful for making a room warm and can double up as blankets. Use old clothes to block out drafts.
- If you have a bigger budget, some camping gear such as gas stoves, heaters would help (and can be used for leisure at any time).
- Have a supply of fire starting equipment, such as matches, lighters and firelighters (never leave a fire unattended).

Other Useful Bits

Here are some other useful things to consider for your stock. Many families would benefit from having a good supply of entertainment in case of difficult times, especially those dependent on technology. Some of these can be wind-up or battery operated in case of a lack of electricity.

- Batteries, USB or solar battery packs
- Wind up or battery powered torches
- Wind up radio
- Toys, board games, small hand-held devices that need less electricity or can run on batteries
- Car charger cables and adaptors
- Wind up torches and lanterns
- Food storage such as tubs, freezer bags

If using an online facility such as Amazon to buy cheap items, please don't forget to check if there is a way to donate to a local food bank or charity while you shop (such as smile.amazon)

Making Your Stockpile

Being prepared for the worst isn't about racing around the supermarket and packing in everything you can. In fact this can be counter-intuitive. A big spike in buying of goods can cause prices to go up dramatically and make it difficult for poorer people to get access to what they need in their regular shop. Therefore it's just as important to plan *how* you will build your stock as it is to plan what to buy.

Start As Soon As Possible

It's essential to get a good head start, as it will be difficult to predict when hardship may arise. Non-food items can be stocked up on straight away, especially luxury items, as these are less likely to impact on food resources for those already in need. Getting started now will also give you time to slowly work on your food stock (see below), especially as prices are likely to rise.

Slow And Steady

To keep some of the costs down- not just for your own shopping but for the people already experiencing poverty- try and collect food a little bit at a time. Here are some tips to help to avoid spikes in food prices.

- Mix up the foods you collect each time
- Have a week where you collect food, and then have a week off
- Set a small budget for days when you build your stockpile, and stick to it
- Think about potential meals that you might prepare, and buy ingredients based on that. Then next time think about a different meal
- Go for slightly more expensive items if possible, so that budget items are still available for those that depend on them
- Don't forget non-food items, as they can be just as important

Combine Stockpiling With Food Bank Donations

Our donations to food banks are needed now more than ever. If you can, please allocate some of your stockpile for food banks to keep their stores from becoming depleted, especially in the face of rising food costs.

Further Resources

If you wish to find more information to help you prepare for any outcome, I hope this list of resources is helpful. Many thanks to James Patrick, Jack Monroe, my family and friends for your advice and support in making this guide.

Books

Cooking on a Bootstrap by Jack Monroe

A Girl Called Jack by Jack Monroe

Preparing for Brexit: How to Survive the Food Shortages by A Rawson

Preparing your Pantry to Survive a Disaster by Harvey Toogood

Internet Resources

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help/find-a-foodbank/> How to find your local food bank via Trussell Trust

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/ways-to-give/make-a-one-off-donation/> How to make a one-off donation to Trussell trust

thermopylaeco.files.wordpress.com/2018/06/getting-ready-together.pdf *Getting Ready Together* a guide to preparing by James Patrick

<https://cookingonabootstrap.com/> Website by Jack Monroe with free recipes and advice for cooking and surviving on a budget

<https://cookingonabootstrap.com/2018/11/15/what-and-why-im-stockpiling-for-brexit/> Article from Bootstrap Cook which is specifically about Brexit and stockpiling

<https://www.ocado.com/webshop/product/Donate-food-with-Ocado-250/271532011> Spend £2.50 and Ocado will donate £5 worth of much needed goods to their charity food partners