



# Reflection Points

## Quotes for compassion

*I have lost a lot of weight. My survival tactic is hot lemon and water and sugar because it breaks the wind down and stops the hunger pangs. Sometimes I feel so sick. When I get paid I can eat for the first two weeks. I cook from scratch a lot. I eat chicken and rice, spaghetti bolognaise, I eat tins of sardines, frozen mixed veg and stuff, Iceland pizza. And then I'm out of money, then I go to my neighbour.*

*Patricia, East London, helped by Tower Hamlets Foodbank*

*I became self-employed working evenings. My partner was also self-employed. We weren't earning very much. We were both working very hard and yet couldn't afford basic things like electricity and gas. I remember being in Tesco and my bank card was declined because the bank had taken some charges for bills not paid. I left a whole week's shopping in the store and went to the car and cried. Receiving a food parcel from the food bank would ease the dire situation in our house and I would enjoy putting food away in the cupboards. It would override the embarrassment I felt of being a pregnant women being unable to provide for her family.*

*Food bank user, Salisbury*

*I called them every day all day and couldn't get through. And every time I got put through to the answer machine we got charged. It was awful...I thought the system would protect me. I never thought I would be completely ignored. I feel I was let down hugely. My benefits are my safety net – if they're removed, how are families like ours meant to survive?*

Kath – a full time carer who waited eight weeks for a decision to cut her tax credits to be overturned.

*I was working full-time hours as a nurse and of course I had Sky, I had everything that you needed. Then I had two strokes. I didn't have sick pay because I was casual bank staff. So then I thought: 'How am I going to do this?' I went through with the social security but it takes six weeks to get that sorted. Then everything was running lower and lower and lower. I still had money from my last wage but it was trying to get the bills paid.*

*I was getting anxious, I had depression. I had to cancel Sky, I cancelled my phone, my life insurance. I had to get rid of my car. My whole lifestyle changed. For somebody who had been working from the age of 16, all my life, and then just being hit with this. It knocked me for six.*

*Financially I couldn't do a loan. I had seen someone had shared the advertisement of my local foodbank. It ended up being my only choice. I can remember driving in and sitting in the car. I came down and sat in the car for a good 15, 20 minutes, not knowing should I go in, should I not? Then I finally plucked up the courage and walked in and really the welcome that I got was just magnificent.*

*I was crying, I felt so low, I felt awful I was taking this food and they were reassuring me. I basically could have come in off the street as anyone but it was genuine, I just needed this bit of help until the benefits kicked in and things became better for me.*

*A lot of people don't seem to know the circumstances behind foodbanks. A lot of people's perception is that someone just walks in off the street, gets food and then goes home. But it's not like that, there's a lot more behind the scenes. Those who think that need to go and see for themselves outright what it's like. It is so emotional.*

**Donna, 44 a nurse from Northern Ireland**

*It wasn't a comfortable sensation, walking into the foodbank. I didn't know what kind of reception I'd get - would they be snooty? Rude? Would they try to make me squirm with embarrassed gratitude? Not a bit of it. They were efficient but polite; kind but not patronising. We'd been forced there after mounting debts became too difficult to ignore. I struggled home on foot with the food parcels - we'd long since been unable to keep a car - because I honestly hadn't known how much food to expect. A couple of tins of beans was about my best guess.*

*Worried that turning up with a carrier bag might come across as a bit greedy, I'd gone along with no means of carrying food. It turned out they supply three days food per person. Luckily, carrier bags were included. When I got home, I laid all the food items out on the table, arranging them for maximum impact. I still get a lump in my throat when I recall the looks on the kids' faces when they saw it. Only the night before, the family had dined on four packets of noodles after scraping together 80p by fishing down the back of the sofa.*

*I can't claim that food saved our lives. I can't even claim that a single visit to the foodbank turned everything around. We ended up going again, a couple of weeks later. But it was the beginning of the end of our problems.*

**Dom, 48 from Bedfordshire**