Food Poverty

By Isla Hall

Food poverty has become a dreadful issue which is drastically spreading worldwide. Although the first food bank was founded in 1967, according to Google research, over the last forty years, food poverty has actually gotten better due to more awareness. But it is still terrible. More than 1,500,000 emergency food packages were handed out last year and Dr Sinéad Furey of Ulster University has declared it a public emergency. In fact it is so severe that in Britain, 1 in 5 children starve.

I recently interviewed my friend Margaret who volunteers at the Bexhill food bank in East Sussex. She has been helping there for ten years and said they could get up to 2000 families a week! However, when I questioned her on what the status of the problem was 50 years ago, she told me that it was much worse and that she had to be extremely cautious with savings, for example going around multiple shops to find the cheapest version of each item. There are three roles within the food bank at Bexhill and it’s her responsibility to pack the food in order to give it to the suitable family. Margaret said that she enjoys helping people, so being a volunteer worker really gives her the chance to do just that. Though, she quoted “I’m concerned that so many families rely on the bank for supplies.” Afterwards, I wanted to know if anyone thought of food banks as a downside, she told me that sometimes people take advantage of the system, or are rude to her when they gather donations. This interview really showed that even volunteers are concerned that such a mass of people require the food banks to feed themselves.

The invention and effort of food banks was to make sure that anyone who is struggling, whether it’s not being able to afford food, mental health issues or even just budgeting badly is able to survive. It’s absolutely certain that they have done their job, but to some people, they’re just not fair. The number one argument is that people need to work hard to survive, and by installing these banks, it completely defeats that point of view. Personally, I agree that creating the food bank was a brilliant idea which has really improved statistics over time, and raised awareness of hunger. Although, I can absolutely see the other perspective, because if I had worked unbelievably hard, I would be upset if people were getting free food.

So, are food banks really that great? If they shut down will lots of people die? Or will they continue to run many years from now? These are all questions without answers, so really it’s up to us. What do you think, because it’s already improved, but at this stage, anything can happen?