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University of Glasgow

Food insecurity among single men in Scotland: A qualitative investigation

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Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of *Doctor of
Philosophy*.

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Abstract

Background: Food insecurity has risen across the UK. Explanations for the rise include austerity policies and the rising cost of living in the context of stagnating wages. Food insecurity is associated with poorer physical and mental health outcomes. Within the UK there has been limited research which has focused on the experiences of single men, despite their over representation at food banks. Single men experiencing food insecurity are not a demographic who elicit sympathy among the public, media, or policymakers, and therefore their experiences receive little policy attention. This research seeks to explore the experiences of single men, and how their lived experience may be used to influence the policy making process.

Aims: This research had dual aims. The first was to explore single men in Scotland's experiences of food insecurity and their perspectives on the causes of their food insecurity. The second was to explore policy actors' reflections on how lived experience data can influence policy related to the experiences of food insecurity.

Methods: Photo-elicitation interviews were undertaken with a sample of 18 men, who did not have or did not live with a partner, and who were experiencing food insecurity, across Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow. These interviews were analysed using abductive analysis, with the lenses of structural violence and biographical disruption applied to further understanding. Nine policy actors were interviewed remotely, using semi-structured interviews, with elements of photo-elicitation incorporating data generated by single men in Scotland. These interviews were analysed using thematic analysis.

Findings: Single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland reflect the complex interplay of individual lived experience of extreme hardship and understandings of the structural determinants of that experience. Their experiences were read as a consequence of structural violence - with social security policies alongside organisations which claim to provide support, particular sites of harm. In the lives of the men there was a coalescing of harms,

with food insecurity and other intersecting conditions resultant from income insecurity and poverty, contributing to physical and psychological harm. Exploring these experiences through the lens of biographical disruption, food insecurity affected individuals' identities and disrupted participants' relationships with eating and food preparation. Participants mobilised resources to cope with their experiences of food insecurity, however, they often reported little hope of their situations improving due to macro-level drivers of their experiences. Policy actors indicated that the combination of photographs and quotes from lived experience research had the potential to be impactful in advocacy and potentially policy briefing settings. They raised concerns, however, around confidentiality and the potential to contribute to negative stereotypes of people living in poverty.

Conclusion: Single men living in Scotland experience needs-based deprivation as a consequence of structural violence, with perceptions of their vulnerability negatively impacting their ability to alleviate their situation in the immediate term through access to support. Lived experience, both directly from affected individuals and through the prism of research, may help to change perceptions, with photographs considered to be particularly impactful.

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Author's Declaration

I declare that I am the sole author of this thesis, except where the contribution of others has been acknowledged. The work in this thesis has not been submitted in any form for another degree or professional qualification at the University of Glasgow or any other institution

Kathryn E Machray

14th July 2022

Definitions/Abbreviations

EBM	Evidence Based Medicine
EBP	Evidence Based Policy
ESA	Employment and Support Allowance
FIES	Food Insecurity Experience Scale
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organisation
ICESCR	International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural rights
IFAN	Independent Food Aid Network
JSA	Job Seekers Allowance
MIS	Minimum Income Standards
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations

1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This doctoral research project seeks to explore single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland through qualitative interviews with 18 men living in Scotland. Reflecting on the wider policy context, the thesis also provides an exploration of policy actors' - third sector, local authority, and Scottish Government - experiences and perspectives of engaging with accounts of lived experience in a policy context and their perceptions of the accounts generated in this study. In this introductory chapter, I will define food insecurity and describe the right to food. The extent of food insecurity in the UK and Scotland, specifically, will be described before providing a brief overview of the policy context in which food insecurity levels have been rising. I will conclude the chapter by describing my research aims and providing an outline of the thesis structure.

1.2 Defining food insecurity

Food insecurity can occur at different levels, for example at the national level and the household level. National food security is concerned with issues such as the effect of climate change on food production, the resilience of food supply chains and the ability of a country to participate in trade. This thesis is concerned with "household food insecurity", which will be referred to as "food insecurity" throughout this thesis. Food insecurity in this thesis is defined as:

[existing] whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire foods in socially acceptable ways is limited and uncertain (Anderson, 1990, p. 1560)

This definition has been selected for its acknowledgement of the different dimensions of food insecurity.

1.3 Food insecurity and the Right to Food: UK and Scotland

The Right to Food refers to the right of all human beings to be free from hunger, food insecurity and malnutrition. It was originally enshrined in Article 25 of the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, proclaimed in 1948, as part of the right to an adequate standard of living which included adequate food (UN General Assembly, 1948). This was ratified by the UK in 1976, through the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural rights (ICESCR) (an international treaty). Article 11(1) of the Covenant recognises the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living - including adequate food, clothing, and housing. Article 11(2) guarantees the fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger and obligates countries which have ratified the Covenant to take steps in this regard. The UK included the right to adequate food in comment 12 which states that:

The right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, have physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement (UN Economic and Social Council, 1999)

Voluntary guidelines have been developed with the aim of supporting the realisation of the right to food (FAO, 2005) and since 2000 there has been a UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food¹ which states:

The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which

¹ The UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food is an independent expert appointed by the UN to examine, monitor, advise and publicly report on realisation of the right to food – see <http://www.srfood.org/en>

ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear (Roncarolo and Potvin, 2016).

In the context of the UK, the legal status to the right to food comes from the 1976 ICESCR. This means the government is obliged to respect, protect, and fulfil the right to food. In terms of the obligation to fulfil the right to food, the UK Government are required to take action to ensure policies are implemented to assist in people's right to food, including the avoidance of the implementation of policies which reduce individuals' ability to access and afford food (Lambie-Mumford, 2015). How this has been enacted in the UK, and the potential for enactment, has been the focus of policy and research activity (Dowler, 2003; Dowler and O'Connor, 2012; Lambie-Mumford and Loopstra, 2020).

1.3.1 Scotland and the Right to Food

As one of the four countries which makes up the UK, Scotland operates with its own national government which has responsibility over certain devolved matters. Devolution relates to the decentralisation of power, allowing for decisions to be made at a more local level. The Scottish Parliament has had devolved powers since 1999, meaning it is able to make decisions on certain issues, including issues associated with food, without approval from the UK Parliament. These powers cover areas such as health and social services, housing, economic development, and certain aspects of social security. In 2014 it published a national food and drink policy "Becoming a Good Food Nation" with the vision that by 2025 in Scotland

people from every walk of life, will take pride and pleasure in the food served day by day in Scotland (Scottish Government, 2014, p. 5),

which has been amended latterly to

people from every walk of life take pride and pleasure in, and benefit from, the food they produce, buy, cook, serve, and eat each day (Scottish Government, 2020a).

A consultation on legislative provisions to underpin the Good Food Nation ambition closed in April 2019. Initially intended to be laid before Scottish Parliament in 2019/2020 the Good Food Nation Bill was introduced to Parliament in October 2021. It has been suggested that this bill should provide a statutory framework to support ambitions set in the 2015 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (Nourish Scotland, 2021; Scottish Human Rights Commission, 2021). The Sustainable Development Goals are 17 goals considered a call to action to achieve peace and prosperity for people and the planet (Scottish Government, 2020b). The second goal - Zero Hunger - relates to the right to food. Whilst it contains targets which relate to a host of topics such as agricultural production, rural infrastructure and protecting food commodity markets, it also contains targets to end hunger and ensure access by all people, in particular the poor and people in vulnerable situations, including infants, to safe, nutritious and sufficient food all year round and to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030. While the Good Food Nation (Scotland) Bill acknowledges the important role food has to play in people's lives, it stops short of enshrining the right to food in Scots law, leaving a notable gap in provision and commitments.

The Scottish Government has publicly acknowledged the right to food, with a consultation on the proposed Right to Food (Scotland) Bill closing in February 2022. However, at present there is an implementation gap, with this acknowledgement and interest in a rights-based approach not yet translated into a reduction in prevalence of food insecurity across Scotland.

1.4 Brief overview of the prevalence of food insecurity in the UK

Food insecurity has been increasing across the UK, however it is only in recent years that food insecurity has been measured at the population level within the UK. This initially took place in Scotland, with the inclusion of questions relating to food insecurity in the 2017 Scottish Health Survey, before then being measured across the UK in the 2019/2020 UK Family Resources Survey. Prior to

these inclusions, the increase in food insecurity was indicated by both the presence of food banks, and through the data which they collected, with the year 2012 cited as the year of the food bank, where food bank use was seen to significantly increase and garner media attention (Butler, 2017). Since then, reporting of food bank use in newspapers has become common, with discussion of food banks synonymous with the topic of food insecurity (Yau *et al.*, 2021).

The number of people accessing food bank services, and the number of food parcels handed out, has been used as a proxy for the level of food insecurity in the UK for a number of years. In the UK context, food banks are described as emergency food providers (Lambie-Mumford, 2013). They accept donations of food from the public, and sometimes businesses, which is then distributed to those in need. Whilst there are different food bank models and various providers, the largest network in the UK is the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network (IFAN and A Menu for Change, 2018). The Trussell Trust operates on a referral basis. This involves care professionals, such as doctors, social workers and health visitors identifying those in crisis and giving them a voucher to enable them to obtain a food parcel containing 3-days' worth of non-perishable food. Some food banks have a maximum usage policy, such as no more than three vouchers within a certain period (Garthwaite, 2016a). Figures released by the Trussell Trust showed between April and September 2017 (when this PhD study began) over 586,907 food parcels were handed out. Between the same time period in 2020, over 1.23 million food parcels were handed out by the Trussell Trust alone (Trussell Trust, 2021). Whilst the data collected from food banks provide a valuable source of information, they are not representative of all those who are experiencing household food insecurity, as not everyone who is food insecure uses a food bank. Canadian research has indicated that only around one-fifth of those who experience household food insecurity have used a food bank, indicating the potential for considerable underestimation (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015), a limitation recognised widely across both researchers and policymakers in the UK.

The inclusion of food insecurity in the Scottish Health Survey from 2018 provides more robust insight into the levels of food insecurity in Scotland. The inclusion

of questions relating to food insecurity came following the recommendation of the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty in 2016 which highlighted the requirement to measure food insecurity levels systematically (Scottish Government, 2016). To do this, three out of eight questions from the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (described in Chapter 2) were included in the survey. Most recent analyses of responses suggest:

- In 2019, 9% of adults were worried they would run out of food due to a lack of money or resources (a slight increase from 8% in 2017)
- Across Scotland, 6% of all adults in 2019 ate less than they should due to a lack of money or other resources, whilst 4% had run out of food for this reason
- In 2019, one fifth (20%) of all single adults under the age of 65 living alone had experienced running out of food (Scottish Government, 2019).

The authors of the reports note that these are likely to be underestimates due to both the filtering of questions and the limitations related to sampling in the Scottish Health Survey, since all respondents live in private households (Scottish Government, 2019). However, it does provide a measurement of food insecurity for Scotland as well as further detail on the demographics of those affected, which represents the main population level dataset in relation to food insecurity available for Scotland.

At the UK level, prevalence of food insecurity is estimated using the UK Family Resources survey. The latest wave suggests: 6% of households were experiencing marginal food security²; 4% experiencing low food security; 4% experiencing very low food insecurity (DWP, 2021). The highest levels of food insecurity across the four nations were in Scotland, with 15% of households identified as experiencing some level of food insecurity (compared to 13% in England, and 12% in both Wales and Northern Ireland). This suggests that, prior to the COVID-19

² Different reports use food insecurity or food security. I have used the wording of the reports, marginal food security is comparable to mild food insecurity, low food security and very low food security can be considered comparable to moderate and severe levels of food insecurity.

pandemic, around 1 in 7 households in Scotland had some experience of being food insecure. The combination of the insights gained from food bank data over time, plus more recent survey data, indicates that food insecurity is increasing across the UK, with Scotland slightly more affected. Figures indicate the number of people experiencing food insecurity is rising year on year, with single adults particularly affected. These data indicate that the experience of food insecurity is not uniform across the population, that it is linked with financial insecurity and that some groups are more affected than others. These inequalities across income, gender, ethnicity, and household type are important to consider in terms of policy responses, mitigation measures and research attention.

1.5 UK Policy Context

This section will provide a brief overview of the policy context which has underpinned the growth of food insecurity in the UK. Specifically, numerous links have been made between rising food insecurity and the pursuit of austerity measures in the UK and across European countries, introduced following the economic recessions experienced in most countries following the global financial crisis of 2008 (Davis and Baumberg Geiger, 2017). The term austerity measures refers to the “official actions taken by government during a period of adverse economic conditions, to reduce its budget deficit using a combination of spending cuts or tax rises”(Financial Times, 2012). A timeline of austerity measures and related context is provided in Figure 1-1 UK Austerity timeline 2008 - 2022, showing measures introduced between 2008 and 2021 as well as the contextual factors associated with austerity and its impacts.



Figure 1-1 UK Austerity timeline 2008 – 2022.

Adapted by KM using data from Life on the Breadline (2018) and Office for National Statistics (2022)

In the UK, austerity policies resulted in changes to public sector spending, with decreases in the funding of local authorities (by 23.4% in real terms between 2009/10 and 2014/2015). The greatest cuts were experienced in areas with higher levels of deprivation and in cities, reducing their service provision (Innes and Tetlow, 2015). In 2018 spending on welfare benefits (e.g. Income Based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit and Housing Benefit) had shrunk by almost 25% following ten years of austerity policies (Butler, 2018). At the same time prices and living costs had risen, resulting in many households experiencing a reduction in living standards (Butler, 2018).

There has been a reduction in people's real wages since 2008 in addition to the reduced spending on those in receipt of welfare benefits and other social security provision. An Institute for Fiscal Studies analysis found that on average people's yearly salary was worth £800 less in real terms in 2018 compared to 2008 (Karjalainen and Levell, 2022). This reduction in real wages is becoming more problematic with inflation in April 2022 sitting at 9.0% more than in April 2021 - resulting in what is being called a "cost of living crisis" in the UK (Hourston, 2022). The rate of inflation has been identified as being highest for those in the poorest income decile (10.9%) and lowest for those in the richest income decile (7.9%) (Karjalainen and Levell, 2022). The combination of austerity measures alongside rising living costs and stalling wages in the UK are hitting the least well off in society hardest.

Austerity measures have been introduced within a wider project of neoliberalism, which has been the dominant ideology underpinning political and economic policy making in recent decades. The enmeshment of austerity with forms of neoliberal governance has been examined (Levitas, 2012; Jensen and Tyler, 2015). Austerity has been described as a "neo-liberal shock doctrine", suggesting that austerity is merely an excuse with which to further concentrate wealth and power (Levitas, 2012), and is now considered a permanent state (Jensen and Tyler, 2015).

Neoliberalism is the belief that human well-being can be best advanced by the liberation of individuals' entrepreneurial freedoms and skills (Harvey, 2005), creating increasingly individualised notions regarding care and risk (Lambie-Mumford, 2019). This view has undermined the welfare state (Bauman, 2005) which has been identified as having three principal elements: a guarantee of minimum standards including a minimum income; social protection in the event of insecurity; and, the provision of services at the best level possible (Briggs, 1961). The neoliberalisation of the UK underpinned the Conservative Government from 1979, and it is argued that it continued through the period of New Labour beginning in 1997 and is ongoing with the Conservatives since 2010 (Jessop, 2007). Neoliberalism underpins the austerity measures which are contributing to increased prevalence of food insecurity whilst also contributing to individualism - moving blame away from the policy drivers and towards the individuals affected by food insecurity.

Drawing on some neoliberal discourse, mainstream media in the UK has variously represented both those affected by food insecurity and those responsible in policy terms. Neoliberal ideology has arguably been supported, when for a number of decades, the behaviour of individuals and groups receiving social security has been publicly scrutinised. The welfare reform has been framed as an issue of dealing with an "underclass" creating an economic burden (Duncan, Edwards and Song, 1999). Terms such as 'workshy', 'cheats', 'scroungers' and 'lazy' have been used to describe social security recipients in the UK (Garthwaite, 2011) - a group which are at increased risk of experiencing food insecurity (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). A review of 436 newspaper articles by Yau *et al* (2021) between 2016 and 2019 found that within news articles related to food insecurity the Government was portrayed as reluctant to admit that there was a link between welfare policies and increasing food insecurity, whilst charities and advocacy groups were urging the government to take action. Government representatives tended to individualise the problem, referring to a 'cash flow' issue, pushing the cause of food insecurity towards those experiencing it and away from their policy choices. With this individualisation of a systemic issue combined with derogatory language regarding social security recipients, at times the UK mainstream media has contributed to a neoliberal discourse.

The effect of media discourse may have implications regarding which issues become a political concern. Who is portrayed as experiencing an issue, and how they are portrayed within news articles is important, as public discourse in newspapers both helps to shape and reflect public opinion, and reporting can have a substantial impact on the public and political agenda (Chapman and Lupton, 1994). Within news articles, food insecurity tended to appear at certain times of year (Christmas and Summer Holidays) and often focussed on children experiencing hunger. ‘Mums’ and ‘families’ received mentions but no articles discussing food insecurity experienced by ‘dads’ or men specifically were mentioned (Yau *et al.*, 2021), despite men being a high proportion of those who access food banks (Loopstra and Lalor, 2017). How issues are portrayed, including who they are portrayed as affecting, in the media can affect public perceptions and the appetite for policy changes relating to an issue. Problems become policy issues once society becomes aware of something as an issue which needs fixed (Dorey, 2005). With Yau’s (2021) study indicating the focus in UK news media coverage is on children, there has not been a focus on men, with the implications of this for how the problem of food insecurity is understood by audiences and consequently within policy domains unclear. At worst, men’s experiences not being represented may contribute to a lack of appetite for considering this group and building support for change, contributing to their experiences of food insecurity going either unnoticed, or not deemed worthy of concern.

1.5.1 Policy context during this PhD

As indicated in Figure 1-1, this PhD study was undertaken during a turbulent time, it was a time of active policy change and implementation, with the Welfare Reform Act, Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic all contributing to the food insecurity landscape in the UK. With the importance of food, both in terms of its basic need for survival and in terms of its social and cultural significance, as recognised through its enshrinement in the UN Universal Declaration of rights, this PhD study began with a view to exploring food insecurity. Phase one of the study, exploring the range and diversity of men’s experiences and perceptions of

food insecurity in Scotland ended in the first quarter of 2020 with COVID-19 causing the country to “lockdown”. The data collection for phase two of this thesis took place in January 2021, almost one year in to the COVID-19 pandemic and amid full implementation of Brexit.

1.6 Thesis Aims

This thesis seeks to better understand the under explored area of men’s experiences of food insecurity and how evidence generated through lived experience research is understood and used by policy actors. Phase one explores single men’s experiences of food insecurity in Scotland whilst phase two explores the role of lived experience evidence in influencing social policy.

Phase one of this thesis aims to address the following research questions:

1. What are single men’s experiences of food insecurity in Scotland?
 - i) How do single men in Scotland mitigate/cope with food insecurity?
 - ii) How do men describe the impact of being food insecure, and the associated coping mechanisms, on their everyday life?
2. What are single men’s perceptions of the causes/drivers of their food insecurity?
 - i) What are the drivers of food insecurity that emerge from men’s accounts?

Phase two of this thesis aims to address the following research questions:

3. What are the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the existing and potential role of lived experience in influencing social policy?
4. How do policy actors perceive qualitative data from lived experiences of food insecurity research and how might this data be used to influence policy in this area?

1.7 Thesis structure

The thesis consists of eight chapters. In Chapter 2, I will provide a review of the existing research literature in relation to food insecurity, with particular focus on UK based literature, in order to contextualise my contribution to the field. My methods chapter (Chapter 3) outlines the methodological approach taken, before providing detailed description and reflexive discussion of the research processes. Chapter 4 provides the participant biographies for the men interviewed in phase one of the thesis. Chapters 5 and 6 present the analytic findings of phase one of the study, drawing on data generated through qualitative research with men experiencing food insecurity. In Chapter 5, I address socio-economic context of men's experiences, and their perceptions of the drivers of food insecurity. In Chapter 6, food insecurity is explored through the lens of biographical disruption with a focus on men's everyday experiences and implications for identity. Chapter 7 addresses phase two of the study, detailing findings from interviews with policy actors. In Chapter Eight, I will provide an overarching discussion of findings, discuss the novel contribution this research makes to the food insecurity research literature and how lived experience research may fit into the policy landscape. Additionally, I will present the strengths and limitations of the research whilst reflecting on methodological implications, and considering recommendations for policy, practice, and future research.

2 Food insecurity in high income countries

2.1 Introduction

Food insecurity has risen across Europe (Davis and Baumberg Geiger, 2017), prompting academic and third sector interest in the topic. Chapter Two will consider the food insecurity literature, starting by defining what food insecurity is. The chapter will then move on to address how many, and who, are affected by food insecurity in the UK. The pathways through which insufficient income drives food insecurity will be identified from the literature in order to understand the broad range of experiences of UK food insecurity. The everyday impacts of food insecurity identified in the literature, particularly drawing from qualitative research carried out in the UK, will be explored before moving on to a particular focus on the stigmatisation of those experiencing food insecurity. It will then go on to discuss literature which has considered gender in high income countries before moving on to the theorisation of food insecurity. The chapter will close having identified what is still unknown in relation to experiences of food insecurity and by justifying the focus of this study within that context.

2.2 Household food insecurity

The experience of not being able to access and afford food has been described in different ways. As outlined in chapter one, food insecurity in this thesis is defined as:

[existing] whenever the availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or the ability to acquire foods in socially acceptable ways is limited and uncertain (Anderson, 1990, p. 1560).

Arguably more commonly, this state is also often termed “food poverty”, and used interchangeably with food insecurity in literature relating to a lack of food (Lambie-Mumford, 2017). The term ‘food insecurity’ is used in this thesis as the term ‘food poverty’ has been criticised for not acknowledging the complexity

associated with an inability to access or afford food (MacLeod, 2018). Food poverty is used more generally to describe the lived experiences of people living in households below average income. This can lead to the inability to access and afford food to be conceptualised as a fixed state, rather than a multifaceted issue with social dimensions (Lambie-Mumford, 2017). The definition used in this thesis allows for a robust exploration of the structural and social aspects of accessing and affording food, which can be viewed as fitting in with wider notions of relative poverty. By focusing on the social and not just the nutritional aspect of food, the definition broadens understandings to emphasise the various experiences present rather than treating it as a binary experience (food insecure vs food secure), allowing for a more nuanced exploration of the experience. This thesis therefore allows for the temporality and chronicity of food insecurity to be considered and conceptualises it as being experienced on a spectrum.

It is important that the spectrum of food insecurity can be accurately and consistently measured to provide an understanding of the scale and development of the issue. One widely used measurement is the Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) developed by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) which suggests that food insecurity occurs on a continuous scale of severity moving from mild through to severe (Ballard, Kepple and Cafiero, 2013). The mild end of the spectrum is measured as individuals having anxieties around their ability to obtain food; in the moderate area of the spectrum individuals sacrifice diet quantity or quality; at the severe end of the spectrum individuals will be experiencing problematic hunger. The use of the term problematic hunger is to highlight that this goes beyond the temporary, uneasy sensation of hunger.

Food insecurity can be seen as a process which is dynamic and is experienced in multifaceted, interlinking ways. In addition to varying by severity, food insecurity can also be a transitory or a chronic experience (Lambie-Mumford, 2017). Transitory food insecurity is short term, occurring, for example, when an unexpected expense overstretches a household budget. With chronic food insecurity the experience is sustained over a prolonged period of time. This is similar to how poverty has been conceptualised (Lister, 2004). However, it is important to note that food insecurity is more than a symptom of poverty, it is

also the inability to realise a Human Right and a fundamental need, and the experiences and outcomes resulting from it are worthy of analysis in their own right.

2.3 Levels of food insecurity in the UK

As described briefly in Chapter One, the number of people across the UK experiencing food insecurity has been rising, however it is only in recent times that food insecurity has been measured at the population level. Measurement of food insecurity in the UK has been a contentious issue between third sector, academics and government, with the former two groups in favour of documenting food insecurity levels whilst the latter group has been reluctant (Mcguinness, Brown and Ward, 2016; Sustain, 2016; Taylor and Loopstra, 2016).

Due to governments throughout the UK being slow to measure food insecurity, for many years food bank use has been used as a proxy indicator for levels of food insecurity. Currently, the longest term understanding we have of how many, and who, are affected by food insecurity comes from food bank data. This section will begin with providing an overview of the findings from food bank data, before moving on to consider levels of food insecurity from non-food bank sources and the demographics of those affected by food insecurity. The section will end by considering the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on food insecurity levels.

2.3.1 Food insecurity levels: pre-COVID-19

A common way of understanding the levels of food insecurity in the UK has been to use data collected on food bank usage. Food banks have been gathering data on the number of people accessing foodbanks in the UK for a number of years, with the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network figures available from 2014. Figures released by the Trussell Trust run from April to March and show that in the year 2014/2015, 1.09 million food parcels were handed out. This rose to 1.9 million parcels in 2019/2020 (Trussell Trust, 2021). Across the UK this represents an increase of 74% in the number of parcels being handed out over five years. This

has risen year on year across the UK - 1.9%, 8.0%, 12.7%, 18.6% and 18.7% increases year on year since 2014/2015 until 2019/2020 (calculated by KM using figures from Trussell Trust, 2021). The highest rises in the same time period have been seen in Scotland (100.1%) and Northern Ireland (155.4%). This rise in the year-on-year distribution of food parcels is raising concerns that the rates of severe food insecurity are rapidly increasing.

In the year this PhD began (2017), data shows that between April 2017 and March 2018, over 1.3 million three-day emergency food packages were distributed, with the number of packages distributed in Scotland rising by 13 %, the biggest increase across the UK (Trussell Trust, 2021). As the number of food packages distributed represents food insecurity that can be classified as moderate to severe, the data collected by the Trussell Trust indicates that increasing numbers of individuals are severely food insecure in the UK, particularly in Scotland.

Whilst the data collected from food banks provide a valuable source of information, they are not fully representative of the extent of food insecurity in Scotland or the UK. Firstly, they report volume of food parcels distributed, rather than unique users. Secondly, the Trussell Trust is only one network of food bank providers. IFAN has identified at least 1034 independent food banks across the UK with many other community groups providing support. Finally, as outlined in Chapter One, from Canadian research we know not all those who are experiencing food insecurity use a food bank (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2015). Food banks are most commonly used by those facing severe food insecurity (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2012). This is supported by quantitative analysis in the UK (Power *et al.*, 2018), with work in Glasgow (Scotland) finding that just over one in six of those who had experienced difficulty paying for food reporting they had used a food bank (MacLeod, Curl and Kearns, 2019). This suggests that relying on food bank data for food insecurity prevalence may lead to an underestimation of the number affected.

Despite the acknowledged limitations of food bank data, the expansion in numbers of food parcels distributed has prompted significant discussion and

debate by academics, politicians, third sector organisations and civil society around what the expansion indicates about food insecurity levels in the UK (Downing, Kennedy and Fell, 2014; Wells and Caraher, 2014). This prompted efforts to measure food insecurity in the UK outside the context of a food bank. Sources other than food bank data, such as food expenditure data, have been used to quantify food insecurity in an attempt to mitigate some of the limitations of the use of these figures, particularly prior to the inclusion of food insecurity questions in Scottish Health Survey and UK Family Resources Survey. Results from both studies are reported in Chapter One. Additionally, a survey of a representative sample of the UK adult population in 2019 found that 14% of respondents reported experiencing some degree of food insecurity in the previous 12 months, while severe food insecurity was reported by 3% of the same - a relative increase of 66.7% over the previous comparable data (Pool and Dooris, 2021). Taken together these varied data sources suggest the problem is considerable and increasing

2.3.2 Prevalence of food insecurity: COVID-19

Food insecurity had been rising across the UK prior to COVID-19, and it continued to rise during the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. The following section will consider the effect of COVID-19 on food insecurity levels in the UK.

Food insecurity rose in the UK during the first COVID-19-related restrictions (lockdown) in March 2020. This initial surge in food insecurity is reflected in food bank statistics at the time with an 89% increase in the number of food parcels given out across the Trussell Trust Network in April 2020, compared to April 2019 (Trussell Trust, 2020). April 2020 to March 2021 saw a 33% increase in the number of food parcels handed out compared to the previous financial year (Trussell Trust, 2021). Furthermore, work commissioned by the Food Foundation, estimated that the number of adults in the UK who were food insecure had quadrupled during the first COVID-19 lockdown, with 8 million adults estimated to have experienced food insecurity in the first two weeks of lockdown (Loopstra, 2020).

Of the 8 million adults who were estimated to have experienced food insecurity in the first two weeks of lockdown, half were unable to get the food they needed from the shops due to shortages, one quarter were unable to leave their homes and had no other way to get the food they needed, and a little over a fifth did not have sufficient funds to buy adequate food supplies (Loopstra *et al.*, 2021). There will be overlapping explanations for why individuals experienced food insecurity during this period, meaning individuals who were already experiencing food insecurity will have had the additional burden of food shortages.

As access issues have subsided, food insecurity has remained higher than pre-COVID-19 with 4.7 million adults (9% of adult population) experiencing food insecurity between August 2020 and January 2021 (Trussell Trust, 2020). A survey undertaken in January 2021 found 2 million adults reported economic issues as the cause of their food insecurity with the majority (80%) identifying this as the only reason for their food insecurity (Loopstra *et al.*, 2021). This indicates that COVID-19 has contributed to a rise in food insecurity rates beyond access issues, with more people unable to afford to buy food than before COVID-19. With food insecurity affecting even more people across the UK, it is essential to understand who is affected in order to address inequalities.

2.3.3 Socio demographics of the food insecure in the UK

Using information from the UK Family Resources Survey, the Scottish Health Survey, and data from food banks we are able to understand the socio demographics of those who are experiencing food insecurity across the UK, with relationship status and/or household structure considered in analyses of those experiencing food insecurity. The UK Family Resources Survey and the Scottish Health Survey both find that younger adults - particularly those under 45 years - are more likely to be food insecure than older adults and that single parent households are more likely to report being food insecure, followed by single adult households (Scottish Government, 2019; DWP, 2021). The Scottish Health Survey notes that single parents are significantly more likely to be women than men. Food bank use statistics are broadly in line with these surveys' findings,

with single adult households the largest proportion of food bank users (Trussell Trust, 2020). Studies conducted using data from Trussell Trust Foodbanks have found that single people, particularly single men and single people with children (usually single mothers), are frequently presenting, with single men often the most prevalent household type (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021). The household composition profile of Trussell Trust Foodbank users remained mostly unchanged between late 2018 and early 2020, with research showing more than half of respondents were single, typically living alone, with single males more prevalent than single females (Bramley *et al.*, 2021). One study looking at Trussell Trust Foodbank clients and individuals accessing advice centres, found that 55.9% of foodbank users were women, however they also found that the foodbank clients were more likely to be single men without children, with being male significantly associated with an increase in the severity of food insecurity (Prayogo *et al.*, 2018). The socio-demographic profiles of those experiencing food insecurity across the UK are in keeping with findings from the United States and Europe which find those who are married are less likely to experience food insecurity than their single counterparts (Martin and Lippert, 2012; Grimaccia and Naccarato, 2020). The range of benefits associated with cohabiting, such as social support and other non-financial resources during periods of financial stress and uncertainty, are unavailable to single adults (Cohen and Syme, 1985; Hobfoll *et al.*, 1996). The combination of high food bank use and potential for lower social support identifies single men as key group to consider in terms of experiences of food insecurity.

The studies outlined above identify single men as making up a substantial proportion of food bank users, indicating a high level of food insecurity within this group, however literature with a gender focus tends to discuss the experience of women, particularly women with children (Power *et al.*, 2018; Bell *et al.*, 2021; Pineau *et al.*, 2021), leaving a gap in our understanding of the experience of food insecurity for single men. In keeping with foodbank usage data from across the UK being male has been associated with increased odds of using a foodbank in Scotland (MacLeod, Curl and Kearns, 2019); with a client audit at a non-Trussell Trust affiliated food bank in Scotland finding around 75%

of those for whom they had socio-demographic information, were males who identified as being single (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015).

The COVID-19 pandemic brought food insecurity more prominently into the wider public's consciousness, with the consequences of COVID-19 affecting various aspects of food insecurity (Power *et al.*, 2020) such as the availability of food, as well as people's ability to access it with some individuals requiring to shield. During this time the key demographic of interest in the media was families with children (Iqbal, 2020), particularly those who would normally receive free school meals. Whilst the food insecurity of families with children was made visible, an increase in food insecurity was felt across many demographics of the population in the UK, with adults living in a smaller household at an increased risk of food insecurity (Armstrong *et al.*, 2021), and arguably less reflected in media discourses.

Despite many of those who are food insecure being single men, little direct attention has been paid to this demographic in order to understand their lived experiences. Lived experience research in the UK has often focused on families, or women - particularly in the context of them as mothers, (Knight, O'Connell and Brannen, 2018; Power *et al.*, 2018; O'Connell, Knight and Brannen, 2019; Bell *et al.*, 2021), however less direct attention has been given to single men who are experiencing food insecurity, despite their frequent identification as a group likely to experience food insecurity. The relationship between food insecurity and gender will be explored in more detail below.

2.4 Food insecurity and gender

Gender intersects at all levels of the food system from the growing, to the shopping, cooking and eating of food (Koch, 2019). Women report higher levels of food insecurity throughout high income countries than men (Grimaccia and Naccarato, 2020). This difference has been attributed variously to economic factors and social roles. Economic factors contribute to more women than men experiencing food insecurity: women account for 70% of the world's poor (Ivers and Cullen, 2011), with different employment opportunities than men, and

earning lower pay for the same job than men (gender pay gap) (Brynin, 2017). In terms of social roles, historically the responsibility for food at the household level (for heterosexual couples) is primarily the woman's; with food selection and preparation perceived as a woman's domain (Kemmer, 2000). Holding the role of household food manager can cause food insecurity dilemmas, with women sometimes depriving themselves (diminishing or skipping meals) to feed others in the family including in two adult households (Bennett, 2015), thus placing them at higher risk of food insecurity within a household than other members (Hanson, Sobal and Frongillo, 2007).

In the context of women reporting higher levels of food insecurity, work exploring women's experiences of food insecurity in high income countries (Tarasuk, 2001; Olson, 2005; Power, 2005; Ivers and Cullen, 2011; Martin and Lippert, 2012; Power *et al.*, 2018; Pineau *et al.*, 2021; Power and Small, 2021) is more common than work exploring men's experiences of food insecurity in high income countries. A narrative review by Pineau *et al* (2021) identified 55 articles which included women's experiences of food insecurity as they related to stigma and social exclusion in high income countries (Pineau *et al.*, 2021). However, despite the number of papers included, it found that there was an "absence of gender-based analysis in the published literature related to food insecurity in high-income countries", an observation also made by Power and Small (2021). A gender-based analysis seeks to understand gendered power relations and norms and the implications of these both between genders and within genders (Hunt, 2004). This can include consideration of how perception of needs may differ based on different genders, and how these perceptions can form barriers and different types of discrimination (*ibid*). Power and Small additionally suggested that where gender is addressed it has mostly been done from a positivist standpoint, utilising quantitative data (Power and Small, 2021). This is indicative that despite work being undertaken in the area of women's experiences of food insecurity, a more gendered exploration of food insecurity is required, particularly one which is qualitative in nature.

As described above, research looking at women's experiences of food insecurity in high income countries is more common than that which considers men's

experiences of food insecurity. This is also the case in the UK specifically. A UK focussed review that sought to better understand the intersection of food insecurity, in-work poverty and gender described how there was “little research with a focus on single male households and their use of food banks” (Dempsey, 2020, p. 9). It described this as “surprising” given this is the most common household type to use food banks, as reflected in section 2.3.3, both across the UK (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021) and in Scotland specifically (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; MacLeod, Curl and Kearns, 2019). One of several recommendations to come from Dempsey (2020) was that the “gap in the understanding of food insecurity for single male households should be addressed through more research” (Dempsey, 2020, p. 20). Whilst men’s experiences of food insecurity are touched upon in existing literature, this is usually done in the context of a mixed sample, rather than solely focusing on men’s experiences (Douglas, 1987; Perry *et al.*, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Garthwaite, Collins and Bambra, 2015; Garthwaite, 2016b; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020; Puddephatt *et al.*, 2020). An exception to this is work undertaken by Haddow (2021), who used an ethnographic approach to explore the experiences of a group of men in England who are reliant on free food resources and experiencing homelessness. Whilst this work does have a mixed gender sample, the concentration is on a core group of males. However, the main findings from this work are yet to be published, and the findings reported so far are methodological. Qualitative research which explores single men’s experiences of food insecurity is required in order to begin to address this gap in understanding.

2.5 Drivers of food insecurity

It is widely agreed that food insecurity results from a mismatch between household expenditure and income, whereby household expenditure exceeds income (Loopstra and Tarasuk, 2012; Beatty and Fothergill, 2014; Garratt, 2015; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Prayogo *et al.*, 2018). Reasons for this mismatch vary across those experiencing food insecurity, however all result in an income which is inadequate to meet nutritional needs. This section will look at causes of food

insecurity as identified in the academic and grey literature: cost of living, debt, social security related issues, sudden financial shocks, and adverse life events.

2.5.1 Cost of living and stalling wages

There are multiple pathways through which income drives food insecurity. Wider economic and social change has been linked to a rise in food insecurity (Garratt, 2015). This includes changes to the labour market which have contributed to stalling wages alongside rising living costs. The years 2011/2012 have been identified as the ones in which over half of households living in poverty contained someone in employment (MacInness *et al.*, 2013). MacInness *et al.* (2013) link this change to an erosion of the financial security previously provided by work due to falling wages, rising underemployment, and an increase in unstable work, exemplified by increasing numbers of people being employed on zero-hours contracts.

Contributing to food insecurity is stalling wages and freezes to social security payments (Figure 1-1 UK Austerity timeline 2008 - 2022 p.23). Real term increases in wages and benefits which were dependable for much of the post-war period have disappeared in recent decades (Forsey, 2014). The stalling of wages has coincided with increasing costs (Forsey, 2014; Davis and Baumberg Geiger, 2017). The All-Party Parliamentary Enquiry (APPG, 2014) described this combination as the 'obvious' conclusion highlighting the impact of price rises in three basic areas: food, housing and utilities expenditure. Food spending represents the largest source of household outgoings for low-income households after housing, fuel and power costs (Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015; Davis and Baumberg Geiger, 2017). This leaves low-income houses likely to be affected by food insecurity. Low to no income is very common in food bank users in the UK (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Pybus, Power and Pickett, 2020), with data showing that 94% of people who use a food bank are living in destitution (Bramley *et al.*, 2021). Low income households saw a 1.1% reduction in median income in the financial year ending 2017, whilst the average household saw a median income increase of 4.7% in the same period (DEFRA, 2021). For families and individuals on low to no income, the margin available once the basics have been covered has been

significantly reduced, leaving them unable to cope with any additional expenditure. Across a range of sources, rising living costs and stalling wages are identified as driving a squeeze on income available to spend on food (APPG, 2014; Forsey, 2014; Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015; Garratt, 2015; Davis and Baumberg Geiger, 2017).

The increasing cost of food affects the quantity and quality of food which households can afford to buy. Research undertaken using household expenditure data from the 2015/2016 Living Costs and Food Survey, and disposable income data from the 2015/2016 Family Resources Survey, found that 26.9% of households would need to spend over 25% of their income after housing costs to be able to meet the dietary standards set using the UK Government's Eatwell Guide (Scott, Sutherland and Taylor, 2018). An analysis of an earlier wave of the Living Costs and Food Survey Work found that households below the average income (living in relative poverty) were, at the time, spending 18-23% of their income on food (Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015). This spend fell below the amount estimated to meet EatWell recommendations, whilst being around double the percentage of income that those above average income had to spend of 10% of their income (*ibid*). Households below average income are spending a higher percentage of their budget on food leaving them more exposed to food prices, whilst eating a poorer quality diet. National food and nutrition surveys have consistently shown that poorer households eat more foods which are lower in cost such as processed meats, biscuits and full-fat milk, and less foods recommended for health, often higher in cost, such as oily fish, vegetables, and wholemeal bread, than richer households (DEFRA, 2014). In this context, as Dowler and O'Connor suggest, the default is to question ability and knowledge at the individual level (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012). However, those on low incomes do not have fewer of these competencies than the rest of the population and in fact, when it comes to managing money, many have developed complex strategies for food shopping on a tight budget (Dowler, 1997). Poorer households eat a less healthy diet due to constraints of income, rather than due to a lack of knowledge or skill. This means that those experiencing food insecurity have limited ability to materially improve their circumstances beyond what they are already doing, with structural factors constraining them.

As the cost of living rises (covered in Chapter One), or the ‘cost of surviving’ (Trussell Trust, 2022), and incomes continue to stall, people’s ability to afford food, particularly food which meets dietary recommendations, will be further reduced. Food expenditure is a part of the household budget which is considered flexible and so households may be forced to prioritise payments such as rent and bills leading them to experience food insecurity (Moffatt *et al.*, 2016). Whilst food-insecurity and poverty can be shown to be separate concepts, they are inextricably linked for many people, with previous research showing that the recent increase in food insecurity in the UK has resulted from increased poverty (Loopstra *et al.*, 2015; Garratt, Spencer and Ogden, 2016).

2.5.2 Social security policy

An additional pathway by which income contributes to food insecurity is through the social security system. The literature indicates that welfare changes have influenced the experience of food insecurity, particularly due to changes to benefits resulting from what is often referred to as ‘austerity’ (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Garratt, Spencer and Ogden, 2016; Garthwaite, 2016a). A policy timeline related to austerity can be found in Chapter One however an explanation of social security, specifically Welfare Policy and the Welfare Reform Act (2012) will begin this section. After exploring the underpinning development of social security and welfare policy in the UK, this section then moves on to explore how these issues have been experienced, as described in the food insecurity literature.

The UK is recognised as being part of a liberal welfare state. The UK welfare state has moderate levels of welfare spending and significant targeting and means-testing for access to benefits and services (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth and Chung, 2017). The role of the state in responding to social needs significantly increased in the early post-war years of the 1940s until neoliberalism took hold of mainstream politics in the late 1970s (Burden, 1998). Following the Global Financial Crisis of 2008, the UK Government, a Conservative-Liberal Democrat

Coalition in 2010, began to put forward the “logic of austerity” which is grounded in neo-liberal ideology (Taylor-Gooby, Leruth and Chung, 2017, p. 11). This austerity promised significant welfare reforms and spending cuts to reduce the nation’s spending deficit. In the 2010 green paper on welfare reform, 21st Century Welfare, the Department for Work and Pensions (2010) asserted that: “the welfare state has become a vast, sprawling bureaucracy that can act to entrench, rather than solve, the problems of poverty and social exclusion”. The Welfare Reform Act (2012) brought in a variety of changes such as increasing conditionality. This is where the person making a claim is required to do increasingly more to receive their payment. Other changes associated with the Welfare Reform Act (2012) included the abolition of the Discretionary Social Fund in lieu of passing funds to local authorities and the introduction of the “spare room subsidy” (Hobson, 2020), better known as the “bedroom tax”, which left certain households with a weekly income reduction of £12 (Moffatt *et al.*, 2016). The effect of such changes influenced peoples’ ability to access and afford food, with those affected reducing spending on household essentials, with food a particularly ‘flexible’ part of their budget (Bramley *et al.*, 2021). Overall, the changes to the social security system have served to increase food insecurity, this will be described in more detail below.

2.5.2.1 Benefit changes, sanctions, and delays

The system of benefits resultant from social security policy in the UK has also been linked to driving food insecurity. Several studies from across the UK have concluded that welfare issues lead individuals to require support from a food bank (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Cheetham *et al.*, 2019; Power *et al.*, 2020; Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Loopstra and colleagues’ (2015) . Analysis of food bank data with budgetary and socioeconomic data from 375 local authorities indicates that greater central government welfare cuts and sanctioning is associated with higher rates of food parcel distribution at the area level. The receipt of a variety of benefits, Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income Support, Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) and Universal Credit are subject to certain conditions (conditionality). These conditions, such as looking for work,

attending meetings at the Job Centre (and attending on time) are set out in a document called a claimant commitment, and failure to adhere to these can result in a benefit sanction (Watts *et al.*, 2014). This is where payments are either stopped or reduced for a length of time which can vary depending on the sanctioning level. This leads to a reduction or complete withdrawal of income for individuals, and whilst they can appeal, they do not receive money whilst waiting for the appeal to be processed. These sanctions have been found to have ‘profoundly negative outcomes’ in terms of the financial, emotional and health impacts (Dwyer, 2018).

Delays and waiting times seem commonplace for those engaging with the benefits system and subsequently becoming food insecure with varying reports of most people waiting between two to six weeks for ESA or JSA (Loopstra and Lalor, 2017) and up to 13 weeks wait for Universal Credit (Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019). For a Personal Independence Payment (PIP) claim (long-term disability payment) it takes on average 20 weeks for a decision following a medical assessment (Turn2Us, 2022). Many of the people who are affected by these factors are already experiencing low income and do not have the financial means to absorb this prolonged period of no payment (Loopstra and Lalor, 2017). Perry and colleagues’ (2014) suggest multiple benefit-related factors predicated food bank use: waiting for a decision after initial claim, having had their benefit payment sanctioned, problems with disability payments, in particular being found “fit to work”, not receiving payments while waiting to appeal decisions, and finally, problems with tax credit payments. Increasingly, welfare reforms are seen to be creating an environment where the social security system does not protect low-income households from experiencing food insecurity in the UK (Padley and Hirsch, 2017). A newspaper analysis by Yau *et al* (2021) found that whilst there was reluctance in some areas of Government to acknowledge the policy drivers of food insecurity, and instead a focus on individualisation, in 2019 the then Welfare Secretary, Amber Rudd, acknowledged that:

It is absolutely clear that there were challenges with the initial roll-out of Universal Credit. And the main issue that led to an increase in foodbank

use could have been the fact that people had difficulty accessing their money early enough. (Walker, 2019)

The impact of the austerity on food insecurity has been most clearly demonstrated in a narrative systematic review of eight studies where all included studies suggested a relationship between austerity and increased food insecurity. Within the UK sanctions, the bedroom tax, delays after application and failing the PIP assessment were all associated with increased food bank use (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Increase in food-bank use has been explicitly linked to unemployment and austerity measures, particularly welfare cuts and sanctions (Lambie-Mumford and O'Connell, 2015; Loopstra *et al.*, 2015). Garthwaite (2016a) in her ethnographic study of foodbank volunteers and users, reports that the food-bank users she spoke to never used the term 'austerity' when discussing the politics of foodbanks, but instead talked about the specific changes which had impacted them, for example "sanctions, delays, appeals, cuts and the bedroom tax" (Garthwaite, 2016a, p. 63). The issue of austerity measures and welfare reform are seemingly inextricably linked with the rise of food-insecurity.

2.5.3 Indebtedness and financial precarity

Pressures on the household budget can result from indebtedness (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021) as repayments on outstanding loans can reduce the money in the budget available for other expenses (Garratt, Spencer and Ogden, 2016). As previously described in section 2.5.1 of this chapter, when the budget is insufficient, food consumption is often impacted first - either in quantity or quality. Garratt, Spencer, and Ogden (2016) found that debt accounted for 16% of referrals in their review of food banks between 2014 and 2016. Outstanding loans, either to friends/family, credit cards, pay day lenders and to the government, are common features of households who require assistance from a food bank. For example, 47% of people referred to a Trussell Trust Foodbank were in debt to the DWP (Bennett-Clemmow *et al.*, 2022). Stalling wages, issues of social security and indebtedness are to a certain extent, arbitrarily distinct -

they are all related to having insufficient money with which to purchase an adequate diet, and as described here there is overlap between the areas. The issues with the social security system outlined in section 2.5.2, particularly the waiting period between application and decision making, leaves people with little option but to take an Advance Payment from the DWP, thus placing them in the organisation's debt. An adult who is single and out of work and is in receipt of Universal Credit has only a third of the income necessary for the Minimum Income Standard - the minimum socially acceptable standard of living (Bramley *et al.*, 2021). With the level of working age benefits set so low any deductions from sanctions or Advance Payment Repayments are likely to cause difficulties meeting material needs. Individuals who are on low incomes, are less financially able to weather any reductions in income or increase in costs regardless of whether this comes through sanctions, delays, or debt.

Financial shocks and adverse events have been found in the narratives of participants in studies of those attending food banks in addition to being positively associated with food insecurity (Power, 2005; Perry *et al.*, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Prayogo *et al.*, 2018; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019). This can mean that food insecurity follows events such as a change in relationship status, bereavement and job loss (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Prayogo *et al.*, 2018; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019). Whilst generally not described as the main reason for referral to a food bank, these experiences, sometimes in combination, were interwoven in the narratives of those attending food banks. Loss of earnings from employment can occur for several reasons, including redundancy, loss of work through ill health, caring responsibilities, or delayed wages. These employment-related issues were cited across several studies (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Prayogo *et al.*, 2018; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021). Bereavement featured across several of the cases found in qualitative studies (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Garthwaite, 2016a). This could lead to financial constraints through the loss of income of the deceased as well as with costs associated with funerals (Garthwaite, 2016a). Change in family circumstances, such as leaving a relationship, or a new baby can also trigger a financially challenging time (Sosenko *et al.*, 2019). It may be necessary to seek new accommodation or individuals may be required to register for benefit

changes which can affect income. This relationship is not yet well understood as it may be bi-directional. Adverse life events and financial strain may lead to food insecurity due to reasons discussed above or it might be that being food insecure increases the likelihood of adverse events such as ill-health, leading to loss of work and reduced income, due to the ongoing strain and insufficient diet (Prayogo *et al.*, 2018).

The literature identifies the overarching issue of insufficient income as driving food insecurity. This is predominantly in terms of the administration of social security payments, precarious employment, rising living costs and debt. These fundamental drivers of food insecurity are acknowledged in much of the literature, with neoliberalism highlighted by academics as creating the conditions for food insecurity (Beck and Gwilym, 2020; Long *et al.*, 2020; Bruckner *et al.*, 2021). Having considered the drivers of food insecurity, the following section will explore the everyday experiences of food insecurity found within the food insecurity literature.

2.6 Everyday experiences of food insecurity

Food insecurity has been associated with a variety of negative impacts on people's lives. This section will look at research in high income countries, located within public health, food studies and social policy disciplines. It will draw on qualitative and quantitative literature, to understand common themes in the experience of food insecurity and explore the impacts of food insecurity on health, the stigmatisation of individuals who are food insecure, as well as the effects of food insecurity on diet, food choice (or lack thereof), food preparation and social participation.

2.6.1 Food insecurity and health outcomes

Food insecurity has been identified as a social determinant of health (Raphael, 2016) and in the UK, the Faculty of Health and NHS Health Scotland identified it as a public health concern (Ashton, Middleton and Lang, 2014; NHS Health

Scotland, 2015). This section will explore food insecurity in relation to health outcomes, using literature from the UK as well as America and Canada.

2.6.1.1 Mental health and food insecurity

There has been limited examination of the relationship between food insecurity and mental health outcomes in the UK. Two studies in the UK, one using data from a nationally representative cohort study (Melchior *et al.*, 2009), one using data from a Bradford based cohort study (Power *et al.*, 2017), explored the relationship between food insecurity and mental health. Both found that food insecurity was significantly associated with an increased risk of a mental health disorder in their populations of interest, pregnant women (Power *et al.*, 2017) and low-income families with children (Melchior *et al.*, 2009). Research has been carried out internationally in Canada and America where the systematic collection of food insecurity data allows for links to health outcomes. A health survey of the Canadian population found that severity of food insecurity was positively associated with six mental health outcomes: major depressive episodes in the previous year, depressive thoughts in the past month, anxiety disorders, mood disorders, suicidal thoughts in the previous year and self-reported mental health status (Jessiman-Perreault and McIntyre, 2017). It was found that with increasingly severe food insecurity, the risk of reporting poorer mental health increased. A further study examining the relationship between food insecurity severity and suicidal ideation, also conducted using Canadian health survey data, found a statistically significant association between food insecurity severity and the proportion of people experiencing suicidal ideation in the previous year (Davison, Marshall-Fabien and Tecson, 2015). A US study found that women who were in receipt of welfare and were food insufficient were highly likely to meet the screening criteria for major depression, even when controlling confounders (Heflin, Siefert and Williams, 2005). These studies indicate that food insecurity is associated with poorer mental health.

Where studies have examined the association of food insecurity, gender and mental health they have predominantly focused on the association in women (Siefert *et al.*, 2004; Heflin, Siefert and Williams, 2005; Power *et al.*, 2017;

Maynard *et al.*, 2018). These have found that in food insecure women there is an increased risk of depression or incidence of a major depressive episode. The gender-based disparities of the effect of food insecurity on mental health were examined (Ciciurkaite and Brown, 2017). This found that increased psychological distress in men - particularly single men - was associated with increased food insecurity severity. There was also an association with heavier drinking and more severe food insecurity which has implications for health. Despite the interesting findings from Ciciurkaite & Brown (2017), the experiences of men remain underexplored.

In qualitative explorations of food insecurity in the UK, mental health problems are frequently described (Garthwaite, Collins and Bamba, 2015; Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020; Puddephatt *et al.*, 2020). This is both in terms of experiencing mental health problems and having these issues exacerbated due to food insecurity. Mental health problems were common in these studies, with eleven out of 20 participants disclosing depression in Douglas *et al* (2020) and 13 of 24 participants in Puddephatt *et al* (2020) disclosing mental health problems. Whilst in Garthwaite (2015) it was stated that “Talking to people, it’s obvious that health problems, mainly mental health problems, affect many of the people coming for food” (2015, p. 40). The uncertainty of affording food (Garthwaite, Collins and Bamba, 2015; Puddephatt *et al.*, 2020) contributed to mental health problems with participants describing the worry and stress as contributing to low mood. Additionally, lack of food choice and unappetising food was described as further contributing to low mood (Garthwaite, Collins and Bamba, 2015; Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020).

Quantitative and qualitative research in the UK and in North America has identified that mental health impacts on food insecurity, and food insecurity impacts on mental health. The effects of the consistent worry associated with the food insecure, and the lack of choice associated with receiving food aid, often exacerbated poor health.

2.6.1.2 Physical health and food insecurity

Food insecurity has been found internationally to be associated with poorer disease management (Seligman *et al.*, 2012). This association has been found to be particularly evident in chronic diseases which are affected by dietary control such as higher blood pressure, heart disease and type 2 diabetes (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003; Holben and Pheley, 2006; Seligman *et al.*, 2007, 2012; Laraia, 2013). Dietary compromises and increased anxiety associated with being food insecure have been found to make it harder for individuals to manage long term health conditions both in observational studies (Vozoris and Tarasuk, 2003) and in explorations of lived experiences of ill health and food insecurity (Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020). This association has been found to be independent of other social determinants of health such as education level and neighbourhood income quintile, and leads to increased health care utilisation and costs in a universal health care system (Tarasuk *et al.*, 2015; Dean, French and Mortensen, 2020). Health care spend per person for individuals experiencing any severity of food insecurity was significantly higher than in those who were food secure, with a dose-response relationship evident with increasing severity (Tarasuk *et al.*, 2015). Within the UK, people reporting poor health were six times more likely to be food insecure than people reporting 'excellent' health (Bramley *et al.*, 2021). Research which considers health professionals' perspectives on food insecurity has found that food insecurity makes it harder for patients to manage their long-term conditions (Douglas, Machray and Entwistle, 2019) with perceived poorer clinical outcomes as a result.

Individuals with food insecurity are likely to experience poorer health, and poor health is likely to contribute to food insecurity. Individuals who experience long term conditions and food insecurity describe how not being able to optimally manage their conditions due to their food insecurity is disruptive for their well-being.

2.6.2 Food insecurity and diet

A key focus of public health research on food insecurity has been exploring and measuring the impact of it on people's diet (Dixon, Winkleby and Radimer, 2001; Tarasuk, 2001; Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2008; Simmet *et al.*, 2017). Those who are food insecure have lower quality diets than their food secure counterparts (Simmet *et al.*, 2017). In Canada, mean intake of vegetables, fruit and fish in adults, as recorded in food diaries, was lower in those who were classified as food insecure with overall dietary quality found to be significantly lower than those who were food secure (Kirkpatrick and Tarasuk, 2008). These findings have been supported by studies which have used biological measures to show the association of food insecurity with an increased likelihood of being low in serum nutrients indicating a diet of insufficient nutrient value (Dixon, Winkleby and Radimer, 2001). As described in section 2.6.1, this dietary impact has been associated with difficulty managing existing health conditions, with diabetes a particular concern (Seligman *et al.*, 2007, 2012; Gucciardi *et al.*, 2014; Lombe *et al.*, 2016; Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020).

The link between food insecurity and lower quality has contributed to concerns around the quality of food provided by food banks. A systematic review (Simmet *et al.*, 2017) looking at the nutritional quality of food provided by food banks in high income countries found that the majority of food banks studied were providing an inadequate quantity of food and key nutrient rich products containing calcium, vitamins A and C, and zinc were lacking. This indicates that individuals reliant on food banks in high income countries may be receiving insufficient food for their dietary requirements. Other forms of charitable food aid have also been found to provide insufficient calorific and nutritional content, with meals provided falling below the dietary guidelines given for the UK (Pelham-Burn *et al.*, 2014). People experiencing food insecurity are likely to have an insufficient nutrient intake, with accessing food aid support still likely to result in an insufficient quantity of food. This leaves individuals experiencing food insecurity with limited means through which to achieve an adequate quantity and quality of diet, with potential implications for their health.

2.6.3 Food choices and preparation

Whilst the food individuals receive from food aid provides temporary relief for the experience of hunger, the lack of choice associated with such food aid relates to broader social issues which are best understood in qualitative research. A lack of food choice has been a frequent theme in lived experience literature on food insecurity (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016; Middleton *et al.*, 2018; Douglas, MacIver and Yuill, 2020; Puddephatt *et al.*, 2020). The absence of choice in food types which comes with being food insecure has been identified as problematic for food bank users (Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016).

Individuals across a number of studies (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Middleton *et al.*, 2018) have reported reluctance to criticise the food being given for fear of seeming ungrateful. Individuals indicated that the lack of ownership over food choice that came with receiving pre-packaged food parcels was problematic as they felt that they were making dietary compromises (van der Horst, 2014). Participants in one study described how they had to take food that they would not normally eat, did not know how to prepare or that was inappropriate for their health or cultural needs, out of a sense that “beggars can’t be choosers” (Middleton *et al.*, 2018).

Food choice was not only limited in the context of food bank use. In qualitative explorations with parents, parents shared concerns around unable to provide the diet they would choose for their children (Harvey, 2016; Jolly, 2017). Parents described providing a lower quality of diet for their children in comparison to their own diet at the same age (Harvey, 2016). There was concern regarding their ability to provide nutritious food for their children, with healthy options deemed a luxury, and the priority being sating hunger (Jolly, 2017). Repetitive meals of items such as cheap noodles were common in one study with all adult participants indicating they were something which they ate frequently, despite the lack of nutritional value, due to the low cost to buy (around 20p) and to prepare (Harvey, 2016).

Food choice limited by a lack of cooking facilities was reported (Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015). In instances where participants were required to share a kitchen, such as in a hostel, the time available to cook, and the facilities on offer, were cited as being incompatible with cooking a nutritious meal. Individuals staying in temporary accommodation highlighted the difficulty and limitations associated with trying to eat, sleep and cook in one room. For the majority of individuals food choice was not hampered by a lack of cooking skill but rather by the facilities they had access to, the cost of running them or the food available that they could afford to cook with (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015).

The cost of food and food preparation plays a significant role in the level of labour required by those who are food insecure. Individuals described the effort of walking miles between different shops to secure the lowest price for different items (Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016). Young people described an acute awareness of the price of food, to the extent that food prices were memorised (Knight, O'Connell and Brannen, 2018). The inability to afford the foods that participants wish to eat was identified as impacting on individuals' self-esteem (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Middleton *et al.*, 2018). This was particularly severe for parents who were unable to provide their children with nutritious meals (Harvey, 2016).

The negative impact that a lack of food choice had on people was frequently reported across qualitative studies, contributing to reduced ability to manage health conditions (as described in section 2.6.1) and impacting on individuals' self-esteem. However, the majority of work discussed above relates to a lack of food choice in the context of receiving food parcels from a food bank, with less known about the impact in the food insecure who do not access food banks, beyond work linking secondary data (Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015; Ejebu *et al.*, 2019).

2.6.4 Food insecurity and social participation

Food insecurity can disrupt the social role of food in everyday life contributing to experiences of social exclusion, as the role of food in daily life goes beyond

its necessity as nutrition. Considering food insecurity from the perspective of participation and exclusion, Dowler and Caraher (2003) express particular frustration at a lack of policy focus on food access and consumption as an issue of citizenship. Lambie-Mumford (2019) also comments on the impact of limiting an analysis of food insecurity, highlighting that a focus on food insecurity framed by healthy eating (as done when considering if people are able to meet the Eat Well Guidance for example) may detract from how constraining food insecurity can be in terms of social inclusion. It is important to consider the ways in which food insecurity can shape people's participation in, or exclusion from, the social and cultural practices associated with food access and consumption (Dowler, Turner and Dobson, 2001). Individuals can be recognised as experiencing exclusion from social and cultural practices and settings when they are unable to buy food as others in society do and instead are reliant on charitable food provision. This exclusion can lead to social isolation and increased inequality (Riches, 1997).

Social exclusion related to food insecurity is a complex process (Meijs *et al.*, 2020). It involves the lack of resources to participate in the normal relationships and activities available to most people in a society, whether in economic, social, cultural, or political arenas (Levitas *et al.*, 2007). Food is often used as a way to socialise whether it is inviting people over for dinner, meeting friends for lunch or sharing a meal as a family. Food insecurity disrupts the role of food and socialising and can leave individuals feeling isolated (McKenzie and Watts, 2020). Social exclusion affects the quality of life of individuals and is often the consequence of poverty. Unsurprisingly, many definitions of poverty incorporate aspects of social exclusion (Bramley and Bailey, 2018).

Food insecurity can leave individuals feeling isolated (McKenzie and Watts, 2020) and unable to participate constructively in social life (Perry *et al.*, 2014). It can force individuals to go against held norms, such as being able to shop in a supermarket (Atkins and Bowler, 2001) or access public transport (Jolly, 2017), disrupting their socio-familial patterns and causing high levels of stress. Young people discussed how being food insecure meant they were not able to fully participate in social activities, for example choosing to go home at lunch time

due to food outlets being too expensive and thus missing out on time with friends in school (Knight, O'Connell and Brannen, 2018).

A study in the USA found individuals with increasingly severe food insecurity had social functioning which was significantly worse than their food secure counterparts (Pheley *et al.*, 2002). The same study reported that food insecurity was also associated with diminished role functioning due to emotional distress (*ibid*), indicating that being food insecure may impact an individuals' ability to participate socially. In qualitative work, negative social emotions have been frequently discussed, such as embarrassment and stigma (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Garthwaite, 2016b; Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016) due to individuals being unable to adequately feed themselves, or their families. The negative social emotions of stigma and shame and the social discourses which contribute to them will be explored below.

2.6.5 Food insecurity, stigma and shame

The stigmatisation of, and shame felt, by those experiencing food insecurity and the contributory discourses will be outlined below. Social stigmatisation occurs when the traits or behaviours of a person or group of people are perceived to be different from, or inferior to, sociocultural standards, as well as when judgements or stereotypes are attributed to them as a result (Ahmedani, 2011). Individuals may feel shame as a result of their awareness of their position in the social hierarchy as a result of their inability to access and afford foods. This shame is ultimately rooted in stigma which can be considered as “enacted” and “felt” stigma (Middleton *et al.*, 2018). Enacted stigma refers to explicit experiences with stigmatisation and judgement, while felt stigma comprises the anticipation of enacted stigma, an individual's own recognition of their stigmatized identity, and the shame they feel as a result (*ibid*). Experiences with felt stigma can cause individuals to internalize stigma by accepting the associated stereotypes and judgement as true and valid, which may damage their self-image and psycho-social well-being (Middleton *et al.*, 2018; Myers, 2020). Like shame, stigmatization can also threaten a person's social ties. This

has been termed “stigma power”, the role played by stigma in the control, exploitation, or exclusion of others. Tyler (2020) conceptualises stigma as something which is ‘experienced intimately’ but is always enmeshed with ‘wider capitalist structures’ of expropriation, domination, discipline and social control. Whilst it is experienced at the individual level, it is tied to the wider forces which underpin decision making at the macro-level. This section will describe experiences of stigma and shame at the individual level, with a lens for understanding the macro structures and processes described later in the chapter.

Within the UK, the shame expressed by food bank users must be understood in the context of the societal discourses which surround being food insecure. Analysis of newspaper articles (Wells and Caraher, 2014) found Conservative politicians contributing to this ideology when discussing increasing numbers of food bank parcels: “[they] are freeloaders abusing the service the food bank offers or they are opportunistically taking advantage of the burgeoning network of food banks offering free food’ (2014, p. 1436). Conservative councillor Julia Lepoidevin deemed food bank users as “selfish” and suggested they “make a conscious decision not to pay their rent, their utilities or to provide food for their children because they choose alcohol, drugs and their own selfish needs” (cited in Elgot (2014)). Such use of language contributes towards the ‘shirkers and scroungers’ narrative, which can create barriers to accessing support and contribute to feelings of shame in those who require support (Garthwaite, 2011).

These themes of stigma and shame, and the burden of responsibility on the individual to ensure they are food secure, are explored with participants across a range of studies of lived experience in food aid venues. Individuals who need to use a foodbank frequently report feelings of stigma and shame (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Garthwaite, 2016b; Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016; Bruckner *et al.*, 2021), with these feelings described as contributing to delayed seeking of help through food banks and impacting on feelings of self-worth (Douglas *et al.*, 2015, Perry *et al.*, 2014). Purdam *et al* (2014) found that in their case studies, all of their 34 interviewees commented on hesitating before

attending the food bank largely due to feelings of embarrassment or worries around being seen as unable to care for their family.

Feelings of shame and embarrassment may have a negative impact on an individual's health and wellbeing and act as a barrier for accessing support. The thought of being known to be food insecure was a negative experience for participants in Purdam *et al.*'s (2014) study of food banks whilst individuals who accessed other forms of support did not report the same feelings of inadequacy. Attendance at a community café was also more positively discussed (Midgley, 2017). Support for individuals experiencing food insecurity, particularly food aid, can contribute to the exacerbation of stigma (Garthwaite, 2016b; Middleton *et al.*, 2018; Bruckner *et al.*, 2021). While it can also be allayed through the friendliness of volunteers, self-worth may be inescapably affected due to the power dynamics between provider and receiver (Lambie-Mumford, 2013; Perry *et al.*, 2014; Garthwaite, Collins and Bamba, 2015). Much of the work exploring food insecurity undertaken so far has sampled from within food banks or other food aid providers, where these dynamics may be an inherent feature.

Chase and Walker (2012) found in their work relating to the co-construction of shame in the context of poverty that a range of terms “synonymous with the concept” were used in place of shame, for example: awkward, embarrassed, guilty, a failure and worthless. These were used to describe how individuals felt about themselves, or were made to feel, during particular social interactions - with family, and in social and institutional settings - with both internal and external triggers. In addition to embarrassment around requiring support for food, other coping strategies could also result in embarrassment, particularly when they involved behaving in ‘socially unacceptable’ ways (Jolly, 2017). Being forced to behave in “socially unacceptable” ways to be able to afford food is a fundamental component of the definition of food insecurity and is a common theme where feelings of embarrassment are reported, such as here and in individuals accessing food banks.

The food received from food banks contributed to feelings of desperation, shame and embarrassment in explorations of food insecurity amongst food bank users,

with participants describing the loss of self-esteem and negative effect on their identity that food bank use had caused them (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Middleton *et al.*, 2018). Van der Horst *et al* (2014) found in a study which included interviews with seventeen receivers of food assistance in the Netherlands, that shame appeared as the most prominently expressed emotion. Across high-income countries the quality of food available was considered to be poor by the majority, which caused stress and impacted on food bank users' self-worth (Middleton *et al.*, 2018). The lack of choice available also contributed negatively to their experience. Thirteen out of twenty studies included in a scoping review described the emotional impact that food bank use had caused the user, especially leading up to first time use (Middleton *et al.*, 2018). The authors categorised this shame as emerging in three food bank related experiences: the content of the food parcel, the interaction with volunteers and lastly the understanding of one's positioning in a social hierarchy. Whilst the content of a food bank parcel is inherent to food bank use, the other areas where shame is experienced may be linked more broadly to the experience of food insecurity. For example, interactions with local authorities and the DWP - rather than with volunteers - as well as the broader positioning in the social hierarchy, which may be something many people experiencing food insecurity are aware of, and not just those who are both food insecure and attending food banks.

This internal sense of inadequacy, coupled with the external disapproval for their place in the social hierarchy, results in negative constructions of "the poor", and an attempt to distance themselves from the "Other", those in a similar situation (Lister, 2004). Within the food insecurity literature this is often seen in individuals desire to present themselves as being 'deserving' of help (Loopstra and Lalor, 2017, van der Horst *et al.*, 2014) so 'othering' themselves from the people they perceive as less deserving. One presentation of this is the belief that individuals should display gratitude for the food they receive, and that complaining is indicative of a lack of gratitude - and therefore deservedness (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015). Consequently, many individuals are reluctant to criticise the food being given for fear of seeming ungrateful. Compared to their usual food preferences however

they stated that they felt there was a compromise (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015). To avoid waste and appearing rude (risking having their deservedness questioned) strategies were employed for unwanted food items such as trading them in exchange for accommodation to avoid sleeping rough or giving it to neighbours known to be struggling (*ibid*).

Whilst stigma and shame have been frequent negative themes through lived experience research, particularly in reference to attending food banks, some people found the food bank to be a positive place as they found “people like me”, helping to reduce the shame they felt at being food insecure (Garthwaite, 2016b). The shame and stigma associated with food bank use has been well documented, however less is known regarding how those who are food insecure outside of food banks experience this. Where this has been discussed, it has been in the context of families with children (Jolly, 2017). Less is known around the experience of shame and stigma outside of the family and foodbank settings. However, with what is known, shame and stigma is damaging to those experiencing food insecurity, influencing their ability to seek support and contributing to social exclusion. Understanding ways in which these barriers to support could be alleviated may be useful in improving support for those experiencing food insecurity.

2.7 Policymakers influence on food insecurity

The evolving policy context, described in section 1.5, in particular social security policy, has contributed to increasing food insecurity. This is widely acknowledged in food insecurity research (section 2.5.2), with many lived experience accounts including the negative impact of policy changes, in particular changes associated with the Welfare Reform Act (2012). Despite such evidence, and a suggested wide scale acceptance in social policy of lived experience evidence influencing policy decisions (McIntosh and Wright, 2019), discourses related to food insecurity by some policy makers have instead focused on the individual (Dowler and O’Connor, 2012). Such discourse serves to divert attention away from the role of policy in this increase in food insecurity, perpetuating narratives focussing on, alleged, poor financial management and

poor lifestyle choices instead (Caraher and Dowler, 2014; Garthwaite, 2017), contributing to the stigmatisation described in section 2.6.5. This part of a wider narrative in which the UK welfare system problematises ‘poor citizens’ whilst praising those deemed as “overwhelmingly self-sufficient” and “financially independent” (Edmiston, 2017, p. 317). This serves to limit the extent to which food insecurity is perceived as a policy problem, and the extent to which those experiencing it are viewed as a favourable target for policy attention.

Policy makers do not just make policy based on evidence, other individual level and institutional level factors may influence them. This relates to why certain issues gain political attention while others do not. Kingdon’s (1995) model of policy streams indicates that to make it on to the policy agenda there must be an identifiable problem, an identifiable policy solution and the appropriate circumstances for the solutions to be implemented, and that any policy solution should be feasible and acceptable. The extent to which an issue can be described as a problem is socially constructed. The social construction of target populations (those likely to be affected by policy) can influence policy formulation, particularly in relation to those perceived as “deserving” or “undeserving”, with perceptions of those who will be affected influencing the popularity of a policy proposal. Narratives such as the individualisation of food insecurity may contribute to a negative construction of those experiencing food insecurity, thus reducing appetite for policy solutions which benefit this group.

In policy making, the social context matters, with it influencing what makes it on to the policy agenda and the likelihood of a policy change being implemented. Maxwell (2019) argued in their paper “The Value of Qualitative Inquiry for Public Policy” that in developing and evaluating policies, meaning, context and processes matter - and are three key areas which qualitative research has strengths in. Lived experience data generated through academic research, may provide a means to communicate the experiences of resource-poor individuals to policy makers (Mitchell, Lange and Moletsane, 2018); however, this is only possible if the knowledge gained through lived experience is perceived as valid within evidence for policy making. Given the policy drivers of food insecurity, and the ongoing negative construction of those experiencing

food insecurity, it is useful to consider how these connect, such as how the role of lived experience research can be used in advocacy and policy making, particularly for groups who may generally be perceived as less ‘deserving’.

2.8 Applying theoretical lenses to experiences of food insecurity

In order to classify and deepen understanding of experiences of food insecurity, a range of different conceptual frameworks and analytic lenses have been proposed or drawn on. Feminist perspectives (Phillips, 2009), sociotype ecological framework (Peng, Dernini and Berry, 2018), livelihood framework assessment (Law, Ward and Coveney, 2011), a paraliminality lens (Moraes *et al.*, 2021), multi-generational interactions lens (Chilton, Knowles and Bloom, 2016) and structural violence (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2014; Whittle *et al.*, 2015; Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020) have all previously been used in food insecurity literature in high income countries. In this section I am going to consider these approaches.

Previous work has described the potential of feminist perspectives in exploring experiences of food insecurity (Phillips, 2009). Such an approach allows for foregrounding of the structural influences on women’s positions in society, and their interpersonal experiences, providing a framework by which to explore the importance of gender within the experience of food insecurity. However, it has been acknowledged that this would not necessarily be a comprehensive in understanding food insecurity, but rather would have specific implications for women (Phillips, 2009). This may make the approach most useful when considering interventions related to food insecurity in order to ensure we do not further entrench gendered inequalities through these interventions, by considering gendered power relations and norms (section 2.4).

The sociotype ecological framework has been proposed as a framework to classify the causes and coping strategies associated with food insecurity. It synthesises factors to determine an individual’s resilience to food insecurity across the life trajectory (Peng, Dernini and Berry, 2018). It operates on three

levels, with the interactions between these three domains determining how a person will respond cognitively and then cope with any stress - in this usage the stress being experiencing food insecurity. The three domains are context, relationships and individual. Context factors include socio-economic position, education, and employment. Relationships includes interactions with family, friends, and work colleagues. Individual factors include physical and mental health and personality. The authors suggest that this framework allows for the planning of strategies to cope with food insecurity, however it does not attribute responsibility for the causes with a focus on coping skills arguably pushing responsibility onto the individual.

A livelihoods approach is an assets-based model. Asset-based approaches focus the skills knowledge and connections a person or community has (McLean, 2011). It uses various factors to determine if a person is capable of sustaining a livelihood, meaning can they cope with and recover from stress and shocks and maintain or enhance their assets. It includes the physical, social, political, and economic environments in which people live and acknowledges the dynamic influence all of these have on each other. Research undertaken in South Australia constructed a food insecurity livelihoods framework for single parents (Law, Ward and Coveney, 2011) adapted from the Department for International Development (1999) and Women and Economic Development Consortium (2001). Financial capabilities, social capabilities, personal capabilities, physical capabilities, human capabilities, time capabilities, structures and processes, and vulnerability context were explored. Participants reported on the following capabilities: financial capabilities (e.g. employment), social capabilities (e.g. support from friends and family or from positive relationships in the community), physical capabilities (e.g. access to a car, storage space), and human capabilities (e.g. knowledge and skills to make good purchasing decisions), time capabilities (e.g. being very time-poor), and structures and processes (e.g. complex relationships with supermarkets). Within this sample, participants were less likely to discuss the vulnerability context, which consists of the physical, social, political, and economic environments in which people exist, and for personal capabilities. A critique of the livelihood assessment is

that it does not take into account the ways in which individuals interact with others and within the socio-cultural context in which they live, with individuals considered to be driven by necessity alone, rather than considering the complex interactions and relationships which motivates behaviour. (Law, Ward and Coveney, 2011).

Multigenerational interactions have been utilised to look at patterns of hunger, and other forms of adversity, across generations (children, parents and grandparents). This lens focuses on household adversity and when applied, it has found that food insecure individuals often identified the roots of their economic hardship in their childhood and in previous generations (Chilton, Knowles and Bloom, 2016). The hardships of hunger, adversity, and violence were considered almost inseparable in terms of how interrelated they were to individuals, with trauma carried across generations. Whilst this focus on the transfer of hunger across generations is important to understand, a critique noted by the authors is that the focus on the household adversity does not fully capture the structural factors which contribute to experiences of harm, for example poverty, racism, and gender discrimination.

The final lens which will be discussed here is the paraliminality lens, which conceptualises food insecurity as liminal (Moraes *et al.*, 2021), where liminality is a state of transition. This allows for the disentanglement of the various interwoven pathways into the experience of food insecurity, and importantly, provides direction in terms of a transition out of food insecurity. Drawing on in-depth interviews with food bank and food pantry users in England, this lens was useful in terms of allowing for multiple trajectories and for untangling social dynamics. However, like the other approaches discussed here, it does not recognise the very physical impact of food insecurity and the consequences for social life.

Approaches which consider the wider structures involved in the experiences of food insecurity - such as the political and economic - are important in the context of them being identified as significant drivers of food. An approach which has the potential to do this is through the lens of structural violence - a

lens which has been applied to experiences previously and will be described in more detail below (section 2.8.1). Such structural approaches should consider the interweaving of the personal with the structural, to understand the individual level effects of being food insecure, such as the physicality involved, whilst avoiding contributing to the neoliberal individualisation of food insecurity discussed earlier in the chapter. One approach which may facilitate this type of understanding is that of biographical disruption - a lens which has been used previously in the exploration of chronic illness. These lenses will be used in this thesis having been identified as illuminating the process of abductive analysis, described in detail in Chapter Three.

2.8.1 Structural violence

Structural violence can be described as the social, political, and economic structures which keep individuals from meeting their basic needs and thus experience harm. The infliction of harm is considered to be embedded in these structures, an inescapable result of being part of these structures and processes (Galtung, 1969). Through structural violence, food insecurity exemplifies the harms that are caused by social, economic, and political systems.

The concept of structural violence has been increasingly applied in health research, providing a useful lens for understanding health inequalities (Jones and McCormack, 2015; De Maio and Ansell, 2018) and more specifically, as mentioned at the beginning of section 2.8 as a lens with which to understand experiences of food insecurity previously. Food insecurity can be considered as an outcome of structural violence (Booth and Pollard, 2020), this will be further shown in Chapter Five of this thesis. Applications of structural violence to food insecurity so far have included to the lived experience of formerly homeless adults (Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019), low income individuals living with HIV (Whittle *et al.*, 2015), and in the exploration of how food, welfare and other support services are settings through which structural violence is enacted and experienced (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2014; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022).

This framing aligns with the widely accepted “social determinants of health”

framework (Dahlgren and Whitehead, 1991; Marmot and Wilkinson, 2005; Solar and Irwin, 2010). However, considering macro systems as factors alongside other determinants, including health behaviours, education etc is considered a more passive approach (De Maio and Ansell, 2018) than structural violence. It is more passive as in this case macro systems are listed alongside individual and community level factors, but are not identified as the deep structural roots - the cause of causes (Braveman and Gottlieb, 2014). This passivity contributes to the idea that the outcomes experienced cannot be addressed, however the identification of a perpetrator allows for acknowledgement that inequalities, such as the experience of food insecurity, can be improved. Whilst it is important to identify the deep structural roots which cause food insecurity, it is also important to understand the consequences of food insecurity on the individual, both in terms of the physical experiences and in terms of the disruption it causes in their day-to-day life.

2.8.2 Biographical disruption

The concept of biological disruption was coined by Michael Bury in his 1982 paper “Chronic Illness and Biographical Disruption” (Bury, 1982) as a means to understand the experiences of individuals with a chronic illness. In Bury’s model, chronic illness is considered as a rupture in the fabric of everyday life. It results in a fundamental rethinking of an individual’s biography and self-concept, the overarching idea we have about who we are. Biographical disruption theorises chronic illness as an experience which shifts an individual from their expected trajectory on to an unexpected one in three ways: the disruption of the taken for granted assumptions and behaviours that structures an individual’s daily life (1982: 169); the disruption of explanatory systems normally used by people such that a fundamental re-thinking of the person’s biography and self-concept is involved (1982: 169); and, the way in which individuals respond, a process which involves the mobilisation of resources in facing an altered situation (1982: 170).

Bury’s sociological work on biographical disruption has been interested in how the meanings of our everyday interactions are changed with the onset of chronic illness and considering how these interactions shift as specific aspects of the

condition make themselves more known over time. For example, individuals with a sudden onset of illness and introduction of symptoms experienced higher levels of biographical disruption than for those who had a gradual onset of illness and were able to integrate small changes into their day to day. The framework of biographical disruption is predominantly used in the context of physical conditions but has also been a key concept in gaining insight into the lived experience of emotional distress through qualitative exploration (Bradley, 2006). This is based on the notion that disruption of expectations can lead to anxiety, contributing to emotional distress, whilst continuity can offer stability (Bury, 1982).

As a framework, biographical disruption allows for an understanding of an experience of a condition in terms of its physicality, but also the impact that the condition has on a person's ability to participate in the life they had prior to the onset of their condition (Engman, 2019). Having been used as a framework outside of chronic illness in relation to emotional distress (Bradley, 2006), it may provide a framework to understand other non-illness experiences, such as the experience of food insecurity. The application of biographical disruption to experiences of food insecurity is explored in Chapter Six of this thesis.

2.9 Justification for study

Despite the wide-ranging research and ongoing policy and third sector interest in food insecurity and people's experiences of being food insecure there are a number of areas where further exploration and understanding is needed. These include work which is undertaken outside of the food bank setting and that which is undertaken with single men.

Much of the existing work has been undertaken in food banks, particularly in food banks in England. This leads to a gap in our understanding of the diversity of food insecurity experiences and of food insecurity in different contexts. The research which has focused on the experiences of food bank users has provided insight into the experience of severe food insecurity, particularly in England. However, as mentioned in this chapter we know that not everyone who is food

insecure uses a food bank - with shame and stigma identified as particular barriers to use. By sampling from food banks exclusively, we miss the experiences of those people unwilling to access services due to the burden of stigma, or for other reasons. By missing this group, we may be missing a particularly underserved population, with different needs to those who do access this type of support.

IFAN has identified that there is a need to understand what the experience of food insecurity is like in the devolved nations of the UK (Independent Food Aid Network, 2018). Limited academic work has been undertaken in Scotland. What has been undertaken has also focussed on food banks and/or been quantitative in nature, leaving a gap in our understanding of the lived experience of food insecurity in the Scottish context (Douglas *et al.*, 2015). In addition, the inclusion of a measurement of food insecurity based on an Independent Working Group by Scottish Government indicates that there is policy interest in understanding food insecurity in Scotland, meaning an understanding of how lived experience evidence may be used in policy would be useful.

Explorations of lived experience of contemporary social phenomena are important to fully understand the impacts and consequences of social policy changes, socio-economic circumstances, and the potential for action. With low income driven by the social security system identified as a particular cause of food insecurity, it is necessary to understand the lived experience in Scotland particularly in light of the Scotland Act (2016) providing new powers in relation to food insecurity.

Studies have included men and women, often speaking to parents, and sampling based on individuals being in lone mother households, and the household type of single men are yet to have their experiences explicitly explored. Several studies have identified them as the highest, or a substantial proportion, of food bank users (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021) and the Scottish Health Survey also indicated they are a group more likely to experience food insecurity than other household types (Scottish Government, 2019). As has been identified by Power and Small (2021)

and Pineau *et al* (2021), there is a lack of literature related to food insecurity which has gender as a focus, with a particular gap in relation to lived experience research and research related to single men (Dempsey, 2020). Work undertaken in this area, has the potential to provide evidence to policy makers regarding a group which can be considered negatively constructed (2.7).

This chapter has provided a background to food insecurity and reviewed relevant literature on the experiences and outcomes associated with food insecurity particularly in the UK providing a rationale for the aims and objectives of phase one which are:

Aim: To better understand single men's experiences and perceptions of food insecurity in Scotland.

1. What are single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland?

- i) How do single men in Scotland mitigate/cope with food insecurity?
- ii) How do men describe the impact of being food insecure, and the associated coping mechanisms, on their everyday life?

2. What are single men's perceptions of the causes/drivers of their food insecurity?

- i) What are the drivers of food insecurity that emerge from men's accounts?

Phase two draws on data gathered in phase one to explore how lived experience evidence can be used in relation to policy makers, addressing the following research questions:

3. What are the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the existing and potential role of lived experience in influencing social policy?

4. How do policy actors perceive qualitative data from lived experiences of food insecurity research and how might this data be used to influence policy in this area?

3 Methods

3.1 Introduction

This chapter provides details of the methods employed in both phases of the research described in this thesis. As outlined in Chapter Two, the experiences of single men in relation to food insecurity are under-researched. Exploration of the diversity of men's experiences and understandings contributes to ensuring that a neglected population, whose hardship will be exacerbated in the current economic climate with the 2022 cost of living crisis, are represented within the literature and policy advocacy can be informed by their experiences.

Phase one of this research explores single men's experiences and perceptions of food insecurity in Scotland. Building on the first phase of the project exploring men's experiences, the second phase focused on drawing in wider stakeholders' perspectives. By exploring policy actors' perspectives on the men's accounts the project also considers how accounts of lived experience are understood within policy making processes and wider advocacy. The decision to explore the role of lived experience in influencing policy making stemmed from the ways in which social policy implementation had affected participants in phase one and through engagement with various organisations through the recruitment process. These organisations indicated that they felt that there was a widely unacknowledged level of need/vulnerability for men. This unacknowledged need coincides with them being a demographic which are "negatively constructed" in policy terms (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Through phase one and two of the study, men's experiences of food insecurity are explored in the Scottish context, with phase two contributing to an understanding of how lived experience research may be used, particularly in terms of advocating for negatively constructed groups who do not receive policy attention.

Qualitative methods were employed for both phases of the research due to the exploratory nature of the work. Phase one of the study used photo elicitation underpinned by a narrative inquiry approach, to enable exploration of a topic which has received little academic focus. Phase two of the study took the novel

approach of using images generated in phase one to undertake photo elicitation in qualitative interviews with policy actors. This chapter details the research design, discussing the use of narrative inquiry in combination with photo elicitation and providing an account of the fieldwork and analysis undertaken, finishing with reflections on the research.

3.2 Research approach

There are three main approaches to research: quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods (Creswell, 2014). Each of these approaches is primarily located within a different research paradigm and the choice of approach should be based on the aims and objectives of the study (Silverman, 2017). These paradigms are objectivism, subjectivism and constructivism (Crotty, 1998). Objectivism proposes that there are objects which exist in our world, including our social world, which inherently have meanings and properties. We come to know the properties of the objects through a process of recognition, but the properties exist objective of us as knowers. Subjectivism is opposite to this, proposing our knowledge is comprised of our perceptions, that the truth of our perceptions is defined by our belief in them. This means that an object or person can simultaneously hold opposite attributes, depending on the perceptions of the viewer. Constructivism takes elements from both positions and sees knowledge as constructed through an interaction between our perspective and the inherent properties of the subject of our knowledge. I take a constructionist approach, believing that knowledge is part shaped by the properties of what is interacted with, and in part by our perceptions, but understands these perceptions are influenced by our positions in the world and our life histories.

The research described in this thesis aligns broadly with established rationales for qualitative research. The research phases are consistent with what Timmerman's characterises as the most common warrant for qualitative health sociology, illuminating the construction of medical beliefs. This is to "draw attention to an established or emerging area of health and show that what many take for granted is socially and historically contingent" (Timmermans, 2013, p. 2). As highlighted, men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland are an

underexplored area in social science and public health research. A qualitative approach was considered most suitable for the exploration of men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland due to the research drawing attention to an emerging area of research, and one which has been underexplored. In doing so the study I have designed this study to be able to ask questions of prevailing understandings related to a condition - in this case being food insecure.

The focus of the first phase also aligns well with Timmerman's (2013) warrant for qualitative health research "witnessing health victories and losses" (p.3), documenting lived experiences of particular health conditions or interventions, including both positive experiences and, importantly suffering. Men's contemporary experiences of food insecurity are arguably "residing in [...] shadows" (p.3) and require empathetic representation. Bolstering this documentation of lived experience, the second phase of research is supported through the warrant of unfulfilled promises (p.3), to understand and document the gap between promises of relief (the social security system) and the actual accomplishments of promises. Also pertinent to the study is Timmerman's (2013) justification for qualitative research which "offer(s) causal explanations that elucidate health related topic(s)" (p. 5) with causality understood in qualitative terms as "to generalise a temporal narrative for the purposes of rendering events meaningful"(2013, p. 5). Synthesising and analysing the common experiences which preceded participants' food insecurity, and commonalities of coping with food insecurity, contributes to meaningful understandings of the causes and consequences of food insecurity. Given the focus on qualitative notions of causality, this rationale for the project also and supports the adoption of an approach to the research which prioritises the narrative documentation of experiences, discussed in more detail below. Taken together, alignment of the aims of the study with several of the established warrants for qualitative health research confirms the importance of qualitative exploration - through research both with men experiencing food insecurity, and those responding to its existence through policy making and advocacy work.

3.2.1 Phase one - narrative approach

Photo elicitation interviews underpinned by a narrative approach were chosen for phase one of the study. Given the focus on meaning making and understanding everyday experiences in the context of individuals' lives, different qualitative methods were considered, but the narrative approach was considered most appropriate. The use of narratives in research provides a framework to investigate the ways humans experience the world through stories (Kohler Riessman, 2007), and it is grounded in the belief that people understand and give meaning to their lives through them (Andrews, Squire and Tomboukou, 2008). Stories honour lived experience as a source of important knowledge and understanding (Clandinin, 2013). The narrative approach originated from within the social sciences and investigates a person's experience of a particular topic or event, and the aspects of this which they find to be the most important. The narrative approach can be seen as having overlaps with a phenomenology approach in terms of understanding a phenomenon as to how it is perceived by those experiencing it. However, a phenomenology approach can be seen as being more about the essence of the phenomenon whilst a narrative approach is about how the participant tells and understands their experiences. From an ontological perspective a narrative approach emphasises the holistic nature of being (Clandinin, 2013), it allows for temporality (past, present, and future), sociality (the personal, the social and cultural) and spatiality (place and environment) to be considered as interconnected, thus allowing for a deeper understanding of the meaning of events within a person's life.

Narrative approaches are underpinned by social constructivism; it places human actions in relation to the social context in which they occur (Etherington, 2013). Social constructivism is based on the premise that people try to understand the world that they live in, and that personal lived experience has subjective meaning (Detel, 2001). These meanings are variable, complex, and socially constructed. The meaning people give to experiences are interpreted and negotiated from social relationships and our interactions with others. In these terms, contemporary experiences of food insecurity in Scotland are shaped by and shape wider social expectations and relationships. Through employing a

narrative approach to engaging with those experiencing food insecurity a holistic understanding of men's perspectives and experiences, and how they are constructed, is possible.

3.2.2 Phase two

Phase two of the research moves away from the narrative approach given the focus of the research interaction is not lived experience but instead is interested in policy processes and professional activities. Although still emotive, this is less interested in day-to-day experiences. Policy research draws on a range of methodological traditions, importantly ethnographic research, which observes policy processes and influences over time, and documentary research, which analyses discourse and framing of policy issues.

Interviewing policy experts has also been identified as a method in the social sciences, and the political sciences, to collect data about a specific area of interest (Döringer, 2020) and has been used in work with policy makers in relation to health inequalities previously (Smith, 2013).

3.3 Research methods

The research methods employed in phase one and two of the study will be described below.

3.3.1 Phase one: considering the research methods

Various research methods, concomitant with the overarching epistemological position and approach, were considered. A key consideration in selection of the appropriate research methods for this study was ensuring that they enabled the men to fully explore and share their experiences of food insecurity in their own words, aligned with the narrative approach detailed above. Living with food insecurity is a potentially sensitive subject as it has been associated with feelings of shame (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Garthwaite, 2016b; Bruckner *et al.*, 2021; Pineau *et al.*, 2021). When

conducting research on sensitive topics of utmost concern is the wellbeing and safety of participants, who may be uncomfortable expressing their experiences or views out of concerns that disclosure will lead to disapproval or further social isolation (Liamputtong, 2011). This fear is legitimised by previous work where food aid providers have questioned the deservingness, or threatened withdrawal of support, when food aid users have expressed negative experiences or opinions (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Beck and Gwilym, 2020; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020).

Initially, focus groups were considered, with this method understood to produce insights less accessible through other methods due to interactions within the group indicating areas of consensus and shared understanding or discord and diverse of views (Wilkinson, 1998). Additionally, focus groups may mitigate the power imbalances which can be present in individual interviews (ibid) with the potential that a group setting is less stigmatising as men were being brought together around the sensitive issue. However, after weighing up these benefits and informed by a narrative approach I felt these potential benefits were outweighed by concerns I had regarding focus groups. First, I was conscious of the potential for participants to have experienced, or be experiencing, additional adverse events and I was concerned about the disclosure of these in a group setting and the impact it may have. Secondly, I was concerned about issues related to group dynamics and the impact this would have on an individual's ability to tell their story. It was highly likely that some people would be uncomfortable sharing their personal experiences with others present (Barbour, 2008). Given the need to provide a safe and comfortable space to talk freely, individual interviews rather than group-based research approaches were considered most appropriate for the project. This aligned with a narrative approach, facilitating the ability to share through open and broad questions, reflexivity, and active listening. This facilitation is intended to lead to meaning being ascribed as intended by the participant, to understand their experiences and interactions from the "storyteller's" perspective (Creswell, 2014).

Within the interview setting, a range of methods of addressing power imbalances and creating safer spaces for discussion of sensitive topics have been developed. Incorporating photo-elicitation in interviews has been cited as useful means to meet both of these aims (Aldridge, 2014). By using photographs as part of the data collection process, the paradigm of power is shifted in favour of the participant (ibid). This empowerment is particularly important in relation to those in society who may have previously been silenced or marginalised (Liamputtong, 2006), such as the single men experiencing food insecurity I interviewed. By producing and sharing the images which they feel best represent their experiences, they are considered to be undertaking research in partnership the researcher, rather than research being done to them (Dickson-Swift, James and Liamputtong, 2008). The idea of doing research with, rather than to, participants is further strengthened by involving individuals in the interpretation of the image they have taken giving them not only a voice, but an active part in the research process. The introduction of photographs can help to provide a vehicle with which to drive the stories of participants, providing a rough structure decided upon by the participant by the photos they chose to take, and the order they chose to talk about them in (Rose, 2016). Incorporating photo elicitation into the research process, therefore offers various opportunities to facilitate men's participation in the study and mitigate potential for exacerbating stigma in the process.

3.3.2 Phase one: narrative inquiry

Narrative inquiry sits within the broader narrative approach outlined in section 3.2.1. It captures personal dimensions of experience over time and takes in to account the relation between individual experience and cultural context (Clandinin and Huber, 2010). Stories have subjective meanings where an individual's sense of identity is negotiated as they create a reconstruction of their experiences to share (Andrews, Squire and Tomboukou, 2008). According to Bruner (1985), narrative knowledge, that which is constructed through stories of lived experiences and the subsequent meanings created, helps to make sense of the complexity of human lives. Narrative knowledge is often that which is memorable or interesting and brings together "layers of understandings about a

person” (p.6) and their culture (Etherington, 2013). Narrative inquiry utilises this narrative knowing to enable us to hear individuals as they make sense of the past and create meanings to describe their experiences. This can provide evidence of the impact of social discourses on a person through how they situate and share their experiences (Etherington, 2013).

In narrative research the participant is asked for their story, or stories, in relation to the topic of interest. Researchers using narrative inquiry aim to prompt participants into telling their story whilst largely trying to refrain from interrupting, in a manner congruent with unstructured interviews. Points of clarification and encouragement of “storytelling” through asking for examples assist in the construction of the narrative. However, storytelling can also be prompted by using a more typical semi-structured interview technique, with a focus on refraining from rushing to the next question to allow participants to finish their story. I opted for this more semi-structured approach, incorporating photo-elicitation to provide a structure with the aim of ensuring a supportive and comfortable experience for participants whilst also leaving space for the exploration of narratives and interesting topics (Charmaz, 2008).

3.3.3 Phase one: photo elicitation interviews

Many qualitative studies on food insecurity have been ethnographic in nature and have been undertaken in food banks. (Pelham-Burn *et al.*, 2014; Garthwaite, Collins and Bamba, 2015; Cloke, May and Williams, 2016; Garthwaite, 2016b, 2016a; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020). Ethnographic approaches in such spaces allow for the development of rapport and facilitates insights into spaces, places and experiences over a longer period of time (Garthwaite, 2016a). An ethnographic approach was considered for this study due to the very rich data ethnographic approaches can elicit. Whilst ethnographies can be conducted across a variety of places and settings, which was desired in this study in order to capture a range of experiences such as those outside of a foodbank setting and across different urban sites in Scotland, it is particularly time and labour intensive. The time and labour required to undertake ethnographies across multiple sites in Scotland, was ultimately considered prohibitive for this study.

To draw out some of the benefits of ethnography in a more limited interview encounter, I selected photo elicitation underpinned by narrative inquiry. Photo-methods have been used previously in explorations of food insecurity (Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019). Photo elicitation uses one or more photographs or pictures as a means to trigger memories and enable the investigation of experiences, memories as well as group dynamics and involves, at its most basic level, the insertion of a photograph into a research interview (Harper, 2002). Taking photographs is an activity which is embedded in social practices (Rose, 2014). This is advantageous as the use of visual methods involves participants using a normal, everyday practice. It has been identified as offering advantages in terms of building rapport, removing potential awkwardness (Harper, 2002; Hurworth, 2003), and allowing for the promotion of dialogue creating a more comfortable discourse environment (Streubert and Carpenter, 2011). They may be preferable to conventional interviews to many participants, particularly those who may have negative associations with interviews (Hurworth, 2003), such as individuals who have gone through assessment processes in order to receive their social security payments, as was the case for many participants in phase one of the study.

In phase one of this study research participants were asked to take their own photographs to aid the sharing of their narrative in the photo-elicitation interview (Rose, 2016). Visual methods have been discussed as a way to make the familiar strange (Rose, 2016), that is to say they allow individuals to describe their familiar surroundings or experiences from a perspective they may not have consciously explored previously, therefore helping to minimise preconceptions and facilitate further understandings of the participants' experiences. This can be particularly useful when the study is looking at something which is perceived as negative as the visual methods can allow for reflection on preconceived notions (Pink, 2013). As described in Chapter Two, food insecurity has been associated with feelings of shame and stigma, with those experiencing it sometimes portrayed unfavourably in the media (Garthwaite, 2011) - photo elicitation as a method provided the opportunity for single men to reflect on how they may be viewed by others.

Further, in phase two elements of photo-elicitation were used, allowing for reflection of policy actors on some of their preconceived notions around the experience of food insecurity and the ways in which it affects men.

In this study, photo elicitation was seen as tool through which I could support the participants to convey information about their experiences and potentially enhance the process through which their narrative was produced. Narrative inquiry (Daugherty, Birnbaum and Clark, 2019) and photo methods (Shannon *et al.*, 2020; Kamdar and Hernandez, 2022) have been used previously to understand lived experience related to food insecurity. Combining the approaches was supported through work which had identified the combination of narrative inquiry and photo elicitation as facilitating deeper meaning and understanding of participants' experiences (Marsh *et al.*, 2016), which seemed particularly important in the context of an underexplored area.

3.3.4 Phase two: policy actors

Online, semi-structured interviews with elements of photo-elicitation were undertaken with policy actors. Conducting the interviews online complied with COVID-19 restrictions at the time, and it was hoped would help with 'gaining access', an issue identified in researching 'elites' - a term used in the literature when interviewing professionals (Mikecz, 2012). Interviews were identified as a suitable method for interviewing policy actors as they 'delve into parts of the policy process which quantitative methods cannot reach', which allows for the exploration of 'innovation, originality, complexity, interactions, conflicts and contradictions' (Duke, 2002, p. 42). Researcher-driven photo-elicitation was also employed as participants not only respond to photographs or objects presented to them, they supply their interpretations of the images, drawing from and reflecting their experiences, helping to locate lived experience evidence from research within the wider policy context (Cleland and MacLeod, 2021).

3.4 Ethical considerations

Both phases of the research were assessed for ethical practice and were approved by the College of Medicine, Veterinary and Life Sciences at the University of Glasgow in February 2019 (phase one) and January 2021 (phase two). Key ethical issues of importance to this study were: potential sensitivity of the research, gaining informed consent, collection and storage of data, and the specific considerations associated with using photographs.

3.4.1 Undertaking potentially sensitive research

The potential sensitivity of this research was discussed in the planning phase of the study. The research methods undertaken were selected in part due to their suitability for use in sensitive research. Before and during interviews care was taken to treat participants and the topics they discussed with sensitivity. A list of organisations available in different parts of Scotland was developed to signpost participants to support if it became apparent this was required during the interview. As previously described, participants were assigned a pseudonym and transcripts were anonymised before analysis was undertaken.

3.4.2 Gaining informed consent

Informed consent is considered a fundamental part of conducting ethical research and in alignment with the principles of informed consent it was important to ensure participants were aware of their rights within the research process. Participants were informed at the outset that they did not have to participate and were free to withdraw from the study at any point.

During the recruitment period, a Participant Information Sheet (PIS) (Appendix A) was given to potential participants with contact details for the researcher should they wish to participate. The researcher would discuss the PIS and potential participants were encouraged to ask questions about any aspect of the research. The potential for literacy difficulties to be present in participants was identified early in the research planning. Due to this it was decided that the

researcher would read aloud the consent form with participants then asked to fill out the consent form to give their consent (Consent form shown in Appendix B). In phase two of the study, a PIS sheet was emailed to potential participants (Appendix C). As the interviews were being conducted remotely, consent was gained verbally. The researcher read out each statement, to which the participants verbally agreed, stating their name and the date at the end of the recording, followed by the researcher taking consent doing the same (Consent form shown in Appendix D).

3.4.3 Collection and storage of different data types

Data storage is an important ethical issue, proper storage avoids data loss and seeks to avoid breaching confidentiality through accidental disclosure of participants. Interview data for both phases were recorded using a digital voice recorder. Following each interview in phase one, data were downloaded to a password protected PC in the MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit as soon as possible after collection. In phase two, data were downloaded to a password protected PC located at my home immediately after interview. These recordings will be retained electronically in the care of SPHSU for 10 years after study completion, after which time they will be destroyed. Where photographs were sent by phone, the phone which they were stored on was pin protected. Those photographs were sent by WhatsApp³. Additionally, WhatsApp does not store messages sent on their servers. Upon receipt of photographs the photos were uploaded on to a computer as soon as possible and the original deleted from the phone.

Physical records, e.g., signed consent forms and transcripts printed for the purposes of analysis, were stored in locked cabinet in the University and returned to the cabinet as soon as possible after use. Following the move to home-working due to COVID-19, a locked cabinet was purchased and kept at my

³ WhatsApp is a messaging service which offers end-to-encryption which ensures others are unable to read the messages being sent between two people.

house to ensure the participant data was kept secure whilst enabling the project to progress.

3.4.4 Ethical implications of using photographs

Pink (2001) has identified the importance of considering ethical implications when using images in research. Consent is of particular concern for visual research because of the difficulty in ensuring anonymity during dissemination if individuals appear in photographs. Accounting for this concern, phase one participants were encouraged and reminded to avoid taking pictures of faces, distinctive markings, or significant geographical locations.

The potential for the ethical dilemma regarding how to use images and acknowledge that these images were created by participants, but also maintain their confidentiality, was considered prior to commencing research. This was a particular issue where a participant was explicitly comfortable with waiving their anonymity (Prosser, Clark and Wiles, 2010), by including photographs which featured themselves or identifiable surroundings. With the support of my supervisory team, I decided that these images could be analysed however were not to be included in the thesis or subsequent outputs. This enabled participants' narratives to be fully analysed whilst maintaining their anonymity in line with ethical requirements from the Glasgow University Ethics Board.

3.4.5 Vouchers for participation

Participants in phase one of the study were provided with £20 of shopping vouchers for their participation. This information was included in the information sheet, and on the recruitment flyer and an important part of the recruitment approach was to make clear men were to be recompensed for their time both taking photographs and in the interview with a shopping voucher. This is discussed more later in the chapter (section 3.10.3).

3.4.6 Anonymity

All interviews were audio recorded and transcribed in full by a professional transcription company that had a data sharing agreement in place with the University of Glasgow in order to maintain confidentiality. Subsequently I checked and anonymised the transcripts. In phase one, participants were asked at the interview whether they wanted to choose a pseudonym to be used for them. Most of the participants asked that I choose one for them, which I did by searching popular baby names for their year of birth. One participant was unenthusiastic about the use of a pseudonym and wanted individuals to know that his experience was his. I explained that this was being done out of a University ethical requirement, in the same way as I had asked participants not to include identifiable information or faces in their photographs. However, his reaction served to remind that anonymity may be considered disempowering (Gordon, 2019). Additionally, participants who took photographs via digital camera were sent their photographs to enable them to make an informed decision of the inclusion of their photographs in my thesis, presentations, and other dissemination activities. One participation chose not to allow their photographs to be shared in any research outputs. Some photographs were altered slightly to ensure anonymity - for example with coverings placed where names may be visible.

Anonymity in phase two presented additional difficulties, as my ability to protect the anonymity of participants was disrupted due to some participants being aware of another's involvement as it had been openly discussed within personal and professional networks. Additionally, participants would speculate regarding who else I might have spoken to. My approach to this was to give vague responses and move the conversation along. These anonymity issues have been previously identified in other work involving interviewing policy actors (Lancaster, 2016).

3.5 Sampling

The aim of sampling in qualitative research is to develop insight into the variation of experience within a given population (Polkinghorne, 2005). It does not aim to be representative but rather participants are selected who have knowledge and experience of the phenomena to be researched; this is known as purposive sampling (Holloway, 2005). In addition to knowledge and experience, purposive sampling also considers the availability and willingness to participate (Bernard, 2002). Several types of purposive sampling strategies have been described: emphasis on similarity, emphasis on variation or non-specific emphasis (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015). Purposive sampling was used in this study with both criterion and convenience sampling undertaken. Criterion sampling has an emphasis on similarity and for phase one was based on the predetermined criterion of experience of food insecurity in the last 12 months. Convenience sampling was also used, where participants met the criterion requirements, with participants who were more easily accessible to the researcher invited to participate - generally where gatekeepers were signposting participants to the researcher who was on site. Criterion sampling and snowball sampling was used in phase two based on policy actors being identified as having a policy-related role on their staff profiles, with suggestions of other people to interview also given.

The sampling frame for phase one outlined certain characteristics. These were that individuals must identify as male, either not have or not live with a partner, be aged between 18 and 65, and reside in Scotland. The focus on single men was driven by the literature which identified that a high proportion of food bank users, were single men, however their experiences appeared under researched in the qualitative literature. Men up to 65 were identified as food insecurity was lower in adults over 65 (Scottish Government, 2019). Men across Scotland were eligible with a view to capturing the experiences of those in both urban and more rural areas. Individuals with mild, moderate, or severe food insecurity as determined by the food insecurity experience scale (FIES) were eligible to participate to capture experiences across the food insecurity spectrum, with the knowledge that much of the existing literature focused on the more

moderate/severe experiences of food insecurity found in those accessing food banks. The sampling frame for phase two stipulated that individuals be currently working in a policy capacity in areas related to social policy, particularly that which related to poverty.

3.6 Recruitment

3.6.1 Phase one recruitment

Phase one of the study was interested in the experiences of single men in Scotland, between the ages of 18-65. Recruiting individuals from socially disadvantaged groups has been identified as more challenging (Bonevski *et al.*, 2014). Additionally, as food insecurity is well documented to be associated with feelings of stigma and shame (Garthwaite, 2016b; Purdam, Garratt and Esmail, 2016; Bruckner *et al.*, 2021), I was aware that individuals may not want to talk about a potentially sensitive topic to a stranger (Sydor, 2013). To try and mitigate this I created a recruitment strategy which identified several recruitment sites including: third sector organisations, housing organisations and male-focused spaces such as Men's Shed. I met with a housing association to discuss the study and gained feedback on potential concerns organisations might have around my photo-elicitation methodology. This allowed me to alter my recruitment approach in order to address these concerns (related to data management and confidentiality) ahead of time. In my initial strategy, I hoped to avoid recruiting from food banks, given the abundance of food insecurity research which has taken place in this setting (see Chapter Two). Through the engagement with a housing association, I was introduced to non-food bank food support services in the area such as community cafes and a community fridge. These relationships were important in terms of building rapport to facilitate recruitment. In approaching a variety of non-food-specific organisations in the first instance, I hoped to be able to recruit from across the spectrum of food insecurity.

In order to identify more potential recruitment sites, I contacted Glasgow

Council for the Voluntary Sector (GCVS), Aberdeen Council for Voluntary Organisations (ACVO), Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), and following advice from a colleague, the Edinburgh Mental Health Information Station to help with identification of potential recruitment sites. Providing a brief outline of the study, I asked about organisations which had a poverty focus or a male specific focus. GCVS and Edinburgh Mental Health Information Stations responded, providing lists of organisations which may be suitable. Additionally, Edinburgh Mental Health Information Station provided a list of lunch clubs around the city. Using the ACVO website, I was able to identify potential third sector organisations manually. Organisations on these lists were approached, predominantly via email as this was the contact information shared with me, about advertising the study. This led to engagement from a charity which provided support to fathers, and latterly support workers signposting participants to the study.

A further tranche of recruitment focused on community resources. I contacted community centres across mainland Scotland utilising both letters and phone calls. I collated a list of libraries across Scotland, and flyers were distributed to these either through the post alongside a letter explaining the purpose of the study or delivered in person (Flyer shown in Appendix E). Information was circulated to housing associations across Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen. Flyers were provided in physical and/or virtual form to: Shelter, Men's Shed, support groups for fathers, Scottish Drugs Forum, Foyer (homeless charity), Citizens Advice Bureaus and Credit Unions, in supermarket community boards, community food spaces, churches and phone booths across the three main urban centres in Scotland. Following advice from participants, flyers were left in small corner shops, bus stops and in pubs with community boards.

Initial recruitment was slow, after discussion with my supervisory team and after seeking advice at a food insecurity session at an academic conference, I decided to widen the recruitment net to include food banks. This would increase diversity amongst the sample in terms of experiences of food insecurity and support. I attended two food banks in person, one in Aberdeen and one in Edinburgh in October and November of 2019 respectively, both were

independently run food banks, one of which was secular, the other was faith based.

The efforts above were supplemented by more general social media approaches. I used Twitter and Facebook to create posts regarding the study which could be shared publicly and tried joining Community Groups, such as Buy, Sell, Swap groups and request to be allowed to advertise my studies in these area-specific groups. Further information on how many participants were engaged through each recruitment approach is provided in section 3.7.

3.6.1.1 Geographical Recruitment

Efforts were made to recruit across Scotland; however, three areas became the focus of recruitment: Glasgow, Edinburgh, and Aberdeen - Scotland's three largest cities. Glasgow is Scotland's largest city, located in West Central Scotland, with a population of approximately 600,000. This post-industrial city contains the largest share of deprived areas of any town or city in Scotland with 44% of the population living in the most deprived 20% of neighbourhoods in Scotland (SIMD, 2020). Edinburgh is the capital city of Scotland located in East Central Scotland; it has a population of around 524,930. Of the 20% most deprived areas across Scotland, 5.9% of these can be found in Edinburgh with an estimated 16% of the total population anticipated to be living in poverty (Edinburgh Poverty Commission, 2018). Meanwhile Aberdeen, located in the North East of Scotland, has a population of 229,060 - less than half that of Glasgow. Aberdeen has 3% of its population falling in the 20% most deprived neighbourhoods (SIMD, 2020). It is frequently described as the "Oil Capital of Europe", with Oil and Gas companies a large source of employment in the area. Food bank use has increased in all three areas (Douglas, Ejebu, *et al.*, 2015) despite variations in the cities being different sizes, in different locations and the prevalence of deprivation varying across them. These differences may impact on the experience of food insecurity, affecting things such as the availability of support services and the likelihood of social networks also experiencing food insecurity.

3.6.2 Implications of COVID-19 on phase one recruitment

Due to the difficulties in recruiting, the recruitment period had been extended, however this extension was cut short due to COVID-19. The pandemic shifted the priorities of people who were supporting recruitment and so they were unable to assist as they had done previously. These organisations were now experiencing unprecedented demand for their services whilst navigating new working practices, curtailing their capacity to assist as they had done previously.

3.6.3 Phase two recruitment

Recruitment began in February 2021 and ran until mid-April 2021. Eligible study participants were those whose job role or organisation related to policy development in the area of food insecurity and poverty more generally. Potential participants were predominantly identified from website searching to identify relevant Government, local authority, third sector and non-governmental organisation staff members. Website searching reviewed 'what we do' statements to ensure those organisations sought to address 'food insecurity', 'hunger', and/or poverty, with those who had job titles relating to policy (e.g., Policy Officer) identified and contacted. The names of individuals in relevant positions at such organisations were obtained, with one participant recruited from snowball sampling. Potential participants were emailed, with a brief project description and a participant information sheet attached. A follow up email was sent to five in the event of no reply, however after two attempts if no response was received, recruitment of that participant or the organisation ceased. In total ten replied and five did not reply.

Recruitment of policy actors was significantly less time consuming, perhaps as they might have seen it as part of their job role to respond. Whilst organisations were stretched by the pandemic, which perhaps limited responses, there was still a relatively good response.

3.7 Sample

3.7.1 Phase One Sample

Eighteen interviews were conducted, with all participants having been identified as experiencing food insecurity. This was determined in the initial meeting where participants completed an eight item Food Insecurity Experience Scale (FIES) to determine first, whether or not they were experiencing food insecurity and secondly, the severity of their food insecurity. All men had experienced moderate to moderate-severe food insecurity as indicated by the FIES Raw Scores. This study aimed to recruit up to 25 participants, with the sample size based on a depth rather than breadth of data requirement. As shown in Table 3.1, the final sample included 18 men: seven from the Glasgow area, six from Aberdeen and five from Edinburgh. Information about the sample will be described in more detail in Chapter Four (Participant Biographies). Men interviewed ranged in age from 28 to 63, with around a third of the men being in their 50s. The average age (of those who provided an exact age) was 47 years old. The men interviewed lived in a variety of Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) locales. SIMD compares the relative deprivation across many small areas in Scotland based on seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime, and housing. Five participants lived in SIMD decile one, which indicates the area which is in the top 10% most deprived areas in Scotland.

One man was recruited via social media, four were recruited via food banks, two were recruited via other food support (community fridge and a community café), one was recruited via a flyer in small corner shop, four were referred via support workers for third sector organisations and six were recruited via flyers left in community spaces (community centres and libraries). Half of the men recruited via community spaces described having the flyer pointed out to them by a member of staff. This range of recruitment methods resulted in a sample where participants predominantly experienced moderate to severe food insecurity, meaning I was unable to sample across the food insecurity spectrum.

Participant Name (Pseudonyms)	Age	FIES Raw Score (out of 8)	SIMD area	Area
Keith	47	8	8	Aberdeen
Paul	31	8	9	Aberdeen
Cameron	39	8	2	Aberdeen
Ashtak	28	6	10	Glasgow
Fraser	45	8	1	Edinburgh
Greg	37	8	2	Aberdeen
Kevin	56	8	1	Edinburgh
Struan	48	7	4	Edinburgh
Scott	51	8	1	Glasgow
Gary	52	8	5	Edinburgh
Edward	59	6	2	Glasgow
John	58	8	1	Glasgow area
James	50	8	6	Aberdeen
Mark	36	7	2	Aberdeen
Joseph	Late 40s	5	6	Glasgow
Michael	48	8	1	Glasgow
Tim	63	5	10	Glasgow
Brandon	54	7	8	Edinburgh

Table 3-1: Summary of phase one sample

3.7.1.1 Sample Attrition

Whilst 18 men were in the final sample, I initially met a total of 25 men who gave informed consent and provided background information. Whilst one of the interviews was unable to go ahead as a result of recruitment stopping before we were able to arrange the interview, the other six either formally withdrew, were uncontactable to schedule the interview or did not attend the scheduled interview. Of those who were not interviewed, two had initiated contact about the research having seen flyers in corner shops whilst five had been signposted to the researcher whilst attending a food bank. One participant answered yes to two of the FIES, with the rest indicating more severe food insecurity. For those who formally withdrew there was a common reason of finding the experience of

considering their food insecurity too emotionally difficult. In these instances, participants were signposted to support in their area.

3.7.2 Phase Two Sample

Nine policy actors were interviewed. As shown in Table 3.2, policy actors were staff from different organisation types: Scottish Government (n=1), local authority (n=1), third sector (n=6) and Non-governmental organisation (n=1). One of the third sector staff had decades of experience working in local authority before moving to the third sector in the last few years and reflected on both perspectives when interviewed. All but one of the policy actors were based in Scotland, based mainly in the three cities participants in phase one had been located. One participant was based in England, and worked for UK wide organisation, whilst one participant was located in a more rural area of Scotland.

Participant ID	Gender	Organisation Type	Job Role	Where Based
0122	Woman	Non-Government Organisation	Senior Project Officer	Edinburgh
1301	Woman	Scottish Government	Senior Research Officer	Glasgow
1488	Man	Third Sector	Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer	Glasgow
0401	Woman	Local Authority	Councillor	Aberdeen
1256	Woman	Third Sector	Co-ordinator	London
3185	Man	Third Sector	Development Manager	Aberdeen
4014	Woman	Third Sector	Co-ordinator	Glasgow
0218	Man	Non-departmental Public Body/ Third sector	Chair/Senior Policy Advisor	Edinburgh
0318	Woman	Third Sector	Co-ordinator/Development officer	Rural Scotland

Table 3-2: Summary of phase two sample

3.8 Data Collection

3.8.1 Phase One Data Collection

As discussed above, phase one involved meeting with men on two separate occasions. The first meeting was used to collect background information (Appendix F), explain the research process, gain consent, provide a research brief (Appendix G) and to develop rapport with the participants. These meetings took place in a variety of locations, chosen by the participants, and included cafes, libraries, food support sites and in their own homes. Notes were taken at this rapport building meeting, as frequently participants were keen to explain what their answers to the FIES meant to them. Minimal instructions were given as to what photographs to take and all participants were offered the use of a digital camera or to take photographs with their own mobile phones. KM created a short camera instruction guide for participants using a digital camera (Appendix H). The participants who used smartphones either sent photographs as they took them or sent them as group of photographs via WhatsApp ahead of the interview. Those using a digital camera brought the camera with the images to the second interview to discuss. Participants were instructed to pick up to 15 pictures which they wished to discuss.

All interviews followed a topic guide (Appendix I). At the outset of the interview, following initial introductory conversations, participants were prompted to begin their narratives with me asking “Can you tell me the story of your food insecurity, using the photos you have taken as much or as little as you wish?”. We would then go through the photographs together, throughout I asked, “Can you tell me about the picture you’ve taken?” and “How does it represent your feelings/experiences?”. The transcripts of the first few interviews were reviewed by the supervisory team to provide feedback. Responses to the relatively unstructured first question, and broad narrative approach, asking for “the story” were varied. Most participants responded with relative ease, providing long narrative accounts. However, at least two participants responded to the opening question by asking “what do you mean?”, my notes from these

meetings suggest they were confused by the question. In both cases I addressed this by asking a simpler, shorter question to start or reiterated that they did not need to use the pictures and we could come back to those later in the interview. On average the interviews lasted around 45 minutes, with the longest lasting 1 hour and 27 minutes. In practice, rather than participants drawing attention to particular photographs in the process of telling their story, the photographs tended to get drawn into the interview after the initial opening dialogue, going through them one by one. For participants who did not take photographs, they were asked to tell the story of their food insecurity with follow up questions asked regarding their experiences in order to explore the experiences they described.

3.8.1.1 Photography Task

Engagement with the photography task varied. Participants were given one to two weeks to take photographs. On average there were 13 days between initial meeting and interview. Three chose to take photographs with a camera, 13 chose to take photographs on their phone, and two did not provide any photographs. One did not provide photographs as he “forgot about that”, and when asked if he would like longer to take them, he declined and said he would like to just be interviewed. The other participant said that photographs were not “really his thing”, but that he wanted to tell his story to someone willing to listen and so had not disclosed this at the initial meeting. This interaction highlighted the importance of offering flexibility in research. This flexibility helped ensure it was clear that participation was on men’s own terms.

For participants that did take photographs, they often appeared to have put consideration into what photographs they took. This was indicated by them often having a clear rationale as to what the photograph represented to them, with the phrase “I took this to show you”, or a variation thereof. Some participants had taken multiple photographs of the same item, keen to take a “good” photo or to make sure a particular feature was clear. This was exemplified when a participant asked me to flick through four versions of the same item *“I don’t know if it came out in one of the next photos...There you*

go...That's what I wanted to come out." (**Joseph, Glasgow**). Whilst not all participants wanted to take photographs, those who did appeared to really consider what it was they wanted to share. All photographs provided with consent to share are available in Appendix J. Two participants commented on how having the photographs to talk about had helped to make the interview feel less formal which they appreciated, supporting the rationale that photo-elicitation can be useful for groups who may have negative associations with interviews.

3.8.1.2 Ending phase one data collection early

During the pandemic qualitative health researchers pivoted to online methods of data collection rapidly. Digital exclusion was considered a barrier to moving phase one online, particularly in relation to lack of access to a suitable device or lack of access to an internet connection (Bowyer *et al.*, 2021). Participants already interviewed described experiencing digital exclusion, accessing libraries in order to use the internet (which were closed during lockdown, some of which remain closed as of January 2022) or being unable to use their WIFI and devices due to a lack of money on their electricity meter. On reviewing the data already collected, guided by the concept of information power (Malterud, Siersma and Guassora, 2016), myself and my supervisory team considered that what had already been gathered was sufficient to meet the aims of the study, whilst acknowledging that the sample was not as diverse as had first been envisioned.

Given digital exclusion and the exacerbation of previous difficulties potential participants would be facing, it was decided moving the study online was not the appropriate course of action, leading to the implementation of phase two of this study.

3.8.2 Phase Two Data Collection

Having been struck by how impactful some of the images in phase one were, and how they provided additional insight, I was interested in how data like this might be incorporated into policy making. Accessing policy actors using online methods

was feasible in terms of their access to the resources required to participate and was facilitated by the reduced time commitment offered by online interview and, I was afforded the opportunity to understand how the already undertaken research may be utilised in policy making, including advocacy

To do this, nine participants were interviewed remotely using both semi-structured interviews and elements of photo-elicitation, with the emergent findings (visual representation of these) a particular focus. An interview guide (Appendix K) was developed to explore the interviewee's perspectives of the role of lived experience data in the policy landscape. The interview guide was tested with two consenting, third sector experienced individuals prior to use, with only minor wording changes made as a result of pilot testing. Following the first interview an additional question was added to explore the perceived/experienced differences between Scottish and UK policy making environments. Eight participants were interviewed using Microsoft Teams, whilst one participant was interviewed using Zoom due to operating system requirements. All interviews were recorded and transcribed. Participants were shown ten slides - photographs, quotes, and photographs and quotes (Appendix L). The data shown to them was selected from data collected in phase one. The ten slides were selected to reflect areas of emergent findings from phase one. Remote interviews allowed for the interviews to be conducted in both Scotland and England, however at times presented technological issues such as connection issues.

3.9 Data analysis

The following section will describe the data analysis undertaken in both phases of this research. In phase one an in-depth, theoretically informed analysis was undertaken. In phase two, a thematic analysis of policy actors' perspectives with the aim of drawing out the implications of the research.

3.9.1 Phase one data analysis

In phase one, the process of data analysis followed iteratively from the data collection phase, with preparation, close reading, coding, and interpretive analysis occurring concurrently. All transcripts were checked for accuracy against the audio recording, notes from my initial meetings with participants were added to the beginning of the transcript and clearly marked as such, and the photographs from participants were added to the transcripts at the points they were being explored in the interview.

Having used a narrative approach, I found Polkinghorne's (2006) differentiation between narrative analysis and analysis of narrative, based on Bruner's (1985) differing types of reasoning, paradigmatic and narrative particularly useful. Polkinghorne suggests two types of analysis of narrative. One whereby concepts are derived from previous theory of logical possibilities that can be applied to the data, and one whereby concepts are inductively derived from the data (Polkinghorne, 2006). I undertook abductive analysis, where both types of analysis of narrative are used. It is a process which aims to find middle ground between inductive and deductive analysis (Timmermans and Tavory, 2012). I engaged with both the themes emerging from the data generated and with relevant theoretical concepts (3.9.3).

I read the transcripts in full to familiarise myself with the data. Whilst reading participant transcripts, I documented preliminary open codes (Braun and Clarke, 2006) as at this exploratory stage of analysis I wanted to record my initial perceptions and reactions to the interviews and used an inductive coding approach.

After using inductive coding to identify preliminary codes, I revisited my research questions and the existing literature before coding in what Saldaña (2016) describes as concept coding - that is coding which considers how the data may link to broader perspectives such as those which are theoretical. On the one hand, men's experiences of food insecurity had been documented in the data in great detail, so much so that the hardships of their lives were described in

visceral detail, akin to descriptions of illness (coded in the everyday coping, the suffering, the grief). On the other, the experiences described went beyond food insecurity, with men prioritising in their accounts explanations of the drivers of their food insecurity - that situated their experiences within a hostile social and economic context (coded in experiences of systems, perceptions of inequality, unfairness, experiences of stigma). For each of these sets of codes, conceptual frameworks that supported analysis were sought. Following an examination of the deeply personal accounts of the everyday experience of the condition of food insecurity, was explored through the conceptual framework of biographical disruption. The remaining data that linked to the wider context in which these experiences were situated, followed a less rigid framework but was influenced by consideration of the concept of structural violence throughout. Structural violence and biographical disruption appeared to fit well with identified themes and concepts which seemed particularly prevalent across the data set, and as briefly discussed in Chapter Two these frameworks provided space for the understanding of the structural drivers and the individual, embodied experience of food insecurity.

I used NVIVO 12 software to code the data after the initial exploratory stage (Figure 3-1: Excerpt from NVIVO), however the initial analysis process was undertaken using printed copies. Coding was an iterative process, with codes evolving through the coding process in response to comparisons between transcripts and engagement with the wider literature, cognisant of answering the research questions whilst also being open to higher level concepts that may be buried in the narratives.

I: So you were saying some friends, for example, will offer you sandwiches, that type of thing.

P: One.

I: One friend. So is there only one friend that knows your situation?

P: Yeah, my family don't.

I: Okay.

P: I couldn't even ask my dad for a fiver, and I wouldn't anyway on the principle that he's nearly seventy years old and I've coming up forty-five. I just wouldn't – I would rather do without.



Figure 3-1: Excerpt from NVIVO

3.9.2 Visual analysis

As part of the interview process, participants were prompted to describe what an image represented to them. Frequently participants offered literal interpretations of their images and felt they had already conveyed what the image represented, and as such at times seemed uncomfortable at attempts to delve more into the visual content of their photographs. Given the relatively modest volume of textual data that explicitly linked photos to symbolic meanings, other techniques of visual analysis such as a content analysis, where elements of the image are objectively counted, were considered - for example settings (e.g., home, food bank, shop, street) and things (e.g. food stuffs, letters, cooking equipment). However, I quickly ascertained difficulty in being objective, when my perspectives on an image were different to how it had been presented by the participant. Therefore, the decision was taken to use the photographs taken as part of the wider transcript. Consequently, the photographs serve within the thesis as illustrative examples of narratives shared by participants. Photographs are shared next to quotations from those who took them within findings chapters five and six. The extent to which it is appropriate to use photographs to illustrate narratives has been explored in phase two, which can be found in Chapter Seven. While the decision to not undertake a specific visual analysis departed from the original intention of how I intended to approach the method, it has served as a powerful way to illustrate the narratives of participants, with photography valued for its potential to promote social awareness and justice.

3.9.3 Structural violence and biographical disruption

Through abductive analysis two relevant frameworks were identified. These have been briefly described in chapter and the process through which they were identified by exploratory coding described above. The first two findings chapters, focused on men's experiences, draw on these frameworks. Chapter Five describes men's accounts of their experiences as situated within a hostile

socio-economic climate and explores how the concept of structural violence can support our understanding of these. Chapter Six focuses on the everyday experiences of men, through the framework of biographical disruption.

Structural violence can be described as the social, political, and economic structures which keep individuals from meeting their basic needs. The inability to meet basic needs is the result of processes which are working in the ways in which they are designed to operate, meaning harm is embedded in these structures (Galtung, 1969). When basic needs are not met, Galtung has suggested that social disintegration can occur, where people do not participate in society in ways which are considered the norm. These structures, and any related disintegration occurs, can be examined in the men's food insecurity narratives

Meanwhile, biographical disruption, has its roots in understanding the experiences of people with who are chronically ill, where the experience of illness shifts an individual from their expected trajectory on to an unexpected one. One area of disruption identified is that of the disruption of the taken for granted assumptions and behaviours in an individual's life (Bury, 1982: 169), with another a disruption of a person's self-concept (1982:169). This ties in with structural violence, with both considering how exposure to certain experiences, or processes/structures, can contribute to difficulty in participating in social norms or in the way in which they previously have.

Structural violence has been described as being able to avoid observation, due to three main factors: 1) the suffering it causes is often experienced by culturally 'remote' groups, 2) suffering is hard to quantify and, 3) it can be prohibitively difficult to describe the complexity of the interweaving of personal biographies with the larger tapestry of the socio-political. Utilising biographical disruption alongside structural violence may help to provide a level of understanding of the suffering experienced, with an understanding of the disruption it causes in people's lives and the embodied experiences it contributes to. Additionally, it provides an individual lens with which to explore how the larger tapestry of the socio-political is experienced by those it harms.

Structural violence allows for an identification of the “cause of causes” - that is to say, the macro level systems and decisions that mean people are unable to meet their basic needs. Meanwhile, biographical disruption applies a micro lens, considering how food insecurity can be understood as a disruptive experience - disrupting both the physical and the social. I argue that using the two approaches leads to a holistic understanding of the experiences of food insecurity.

3.9.4 Phase two data analysis

In phase two, a similar initial process was undertaken. All transcripts were checked for accuracy against the audio recording and were then read in full to familiarise myself with the data, taking notes on preliminary ideas. I developed elemental codes which were primarily descriptive, then structural coding which allowed me to consider how these descriptive codes linked to my research questions (Saldaña, 2016). This approach allowed me to consider which codes stood out as answering my research questions (deductive) or stood out as being particularly novel or particularly prevalent across the data set (inductive) - with some overlap between the two. These codes were then applied across the data set, with a second cycle of coding there was a refining of the codes, with some codes expanded upon and new codes added as required. The findings from this analysis will be presented in Chapter Seven.

3.10 Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity in qualitative research is well noted (Haynes, 2012; Dodgson, 2019). By incorporating reflexivity in this study, through reflection and writing about my role in the research, I acknowledge the role that I play in each component of the research process. Reflexivity acknowledges that knowledge attained is co-constructed by both the researcher and the participant. If we accept the importance of the characteristics of participants in

our findings, we must also acknowledge how the characteristics of the researcher will also interact with our findings.

3.10.1 Researcher characteristics

A myriad of characteristics such as gender, age, body language, accent and clothing may all influence how participants view the researcher, and thus influence how they share their story or what they opt to disclose. Prior to undertaking fieldwork, I was aware that I was a middle-class, Scottish woman in my twenties interviewing economically disadvantaged men of differing ages across Scotland. My identity as a woman was something which was queried frequently when discussing my research both with fellow researchers, and with friends and family. This is an issue which other women researching men have discussed, where the capacity to conduct credible and/or safe research is called into question (Lefkowich, 2019). Safety was a frequently cited concern, and where possible I was encouraged to meet participants in a public space, and whilst violence against women is of course a very real risk, I found the inherent conceptualisation of myself as “at risk” and my participants as “a potential threat”, difficult to navigate. How could I expect men to trust me to share their stories with, if I was perceived as being distrustful of them? Additionally, at times this concern felt rooted in the stigmatisation of living with insufficient resource, given I have never had my safety openly questioned when meeting “professional” males in a work environment, either as colleagues or as participants. However, across the duration of the study, I also found that some of the participants in phase one characterised me as vulnerable. I believe this may have been due to the combination of my age relative to theirs, as well as my gender, as I was younger than all the men I interviewed. When I was characterised as vulnerable, I found they adopted something of a paternalistic role. This was particularly true in Glasgow, where several participants expressed that they would like to “make sure I got on the bus okay” or advised the “safest” or “easiest” way for me to get back to the city centre following our interview. It is possible that this paternalistic manner post-interview could be indicative that some information was not shared with me during the interview process, if I was perceived as too fragile in some way to share the information with (Horn, 1997).

This may have meant data generation was impacted, with experiences not shared or altered to be less graphic in order to “protect” me in some way.

Within the literature relating to women researching men, objectifying or flirtatious behaviour toward female researchers is a common reflection (Sallee and Harris, 2011; Haddow, 2021), however I had limited experience of this. Only one participant, who upon finding out I had was in a relationship, said this was a shame as I was “his dream girl”. Rather than interpreting this in any malicious way, it suggested to me that in the absence of close friendships, a person being engaged and listening to his reflections and experiences had been impactful for him, perhaps allowing for a depth of information to be shared, in opposition to the potential limiting of information when participants adopted a paternalistic role as described above.

Whilst I endeavoured to make it clear to participants that I was there in my capacity as a researcher, in several instances participants asked my advice on issues related to claiming their social security or accessing further support, with an expectation that I had some kind of ‘insider’ knowledge. In these cases, I would clarify my role as a researcher and provide information at the end of the interview signposting them to services which may be able to help. A couple of participants were also very keen to clarify what my exact role was, and who I was or was not affiliated with. This required an element of trust building and reassurance that I had nothing to do with social work, nor the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). I would reiterate the confidential nature of the research with the caveats around my safeguarding responsibilities. Sharing my prior work history seemed to be quite important in terms of increasing trust between participants and whilst I cannot be sure that wariness of my “real” agenda did not influence what was shared with me, I do feel that the majority of participants were open with me.

A factor which I did not consider initially, but which seemed to build rapport with participants, was my hair colour. At the time of data collection for phase one I had unconventional hair colours (pink and purple) and almost every participant mentioned this. This was usually brought up by participants in terms of me “not being what they expected” of “someone from the university”. This

seemed to be conveyed as a positive, putting participants at ease and providing a “safe” conversation point.

Researchers inevitably influence how participants express themselves and as such I am aware of the role I, by my inherent characteristics, will have influenced how participants express themselves. Some participants would apologise for swearing in front of me, citing beliefs around it being wrong to swear in front of “a lady”, and so it may be that at times participants held back from sharing certain aspects of their experiences or shared it in less forceful terms, due to their perceptions around this. As well as the potential negative impacts my characteristics may have had on the data generation, it does also seem that dominant norms of womanhood such as compassion or nurturing, may have been beneficial in providing a space for the men to express themselves. The content of some of the data generated in phase one seemed to surprise some participants in phase two, with one participant surprised at what the men were willing to disclose.

3.10.2 Past experience influencing the research

My work experience in community health in regeneration areas and in mental health, predominantly in supporting individuals to access and maintain accommodation, influenced how I was perceived by some participants and also at times made the identity of “researcher” a difficult one to manage. For example, my motives for carrying out the research were sometimes queried by participants. I generally answered that as I had previously worked in community health and for a mental health charity, and I had been aware for a number of years of the growing problem of food insecurity. For some, this appeared sufficient with one man responding “oh, so you get it”, implying that my previous work history provided me some credibility or trustworthiness in his eyes. For others, they continued to probe, specifically around the decision to look at men. I would explain that I knew lots of men were experiencing food insecurity but that their stories were not being shared and I wanted to contribute to rectifying this. From my perspective, this question of “why men who are experiencing food insecurity” from participants was less about my identity as a woman and more about their identity as men. This seemed to be

related to how they felt their neediness or deservingness was perceived by others given their identity as single men. This seemed related to an internalisation of their expected role in terms of provision, leading to an element of scepticism about the motives or legitimacy of the research.

I was conscious of the potential for alternative power dynamics when interviewing professionals, given much of the literature assumes that ‘elite’ participants will always occupy a more powerful position than the interviewer (Mikecz, 2012). However, this was not a dynamic I felt particularly strongly when conducting the interviews. I felt my previous work history helped to build rapport with policy actors, particularly those who currently worked in the third sector. There seemed to be a general assumption of shared knowledge, rather than issues which have been documented previously in ‘elite’ interviews (Lancaster, 2016). I did find that in some interviews parts of the interview felt constrained by policy actors following the ‘official line’, perhaps limiting the fullness of their responses in some cases.

My experience in the third and health sectors influenced how I carried out my research. For example, ensuring I was able to at least signpost individuals to support post-interview was important to me, as was ensuring some this support was locale specific. I was aware that the interviews may be quite emotionally demanding, and so in keeping with previous work practices, helped to set up a small group of PhD students who were also researching in emotionally demanding areas. We would “debrief” after particularly challenging interactions and also met once a month over the course of data collection, where we would reflect on our research utilising Gibb’s Reflective Cycle (Gibbs, 1988). These reflection sessions were useful in managing the emotional demands of the research and encouraging good practice in research interactions with participants.

3.10.3 Participants receiving vouchers

From the outset I considered it ethically important that participants were compensated in some way for the time and labour they spent sharing their experiences. I was, and remain, disappointed that I was only able to thank them

for their time and energy with vouchers rather than money due to a combination of factors. Vouchers are standard practice in the Social and Public Health Sciences Unit in which I was based and the MVLS Ethics committee cites concerns about what may be considered as an “inappropriate inducement” to take part. Additionally, gatekeepers highlighted that participants in receipt of social security may fear the effect on their benefits of receiving a cash payment. I am glad I could at least acknowledge their role as co-creators of knowledge, and the emotional labour this involved, in some form.

Unexpectedly, a participant sent photographs of his purchases with the voucher (Figure 3-2). One of these photographs was in juxtaposition to a photograph he had shared in his interview (Figure 3-3).



Figure 3-2 Photographs showing items purchased with vouchers



Figure 3-3 Photograph from participant prior to interview of bare fridge

Initially on receiving the photographs I was concerned that they felt they had to justify their use of the voucher, given the level of surveillance participants were used to being under. However, it became clear the participant was sharing his purchases out of excitement rather than a sense of duty. He described how he was looking forward to being able to take pizza and beer over to his friend's house who had been supporting him in recent months. Being able to contribute was important to him, as was the ritual of sharing food and drinks with friends. This interaction served to highlight the importance of ensuring participants are compensated for their time and labour, as well as the importance of the social aspects of food.

3.11 Summary

This chapter has outlined my research approach, explaining the philosophical underpinnings of the study and research design. Having identified research

questions through gaps identified in my literature review, I identified qualitative methodology as the appropriate choice to answer these questions. Following consideration of different qualitative approaches, taking into account the sensitivities of the project for phase one, I identified photo elicitation interviews underpinned by a narrative approach as one which would answer the research questions for phase one of the study whilst also being considerate of the potentially sensitive nature of the topic. The acceptability of the design was checked with my supervisors, an academic with prior experience in the field of food insecurity and two members of a third sector organisation working in this area. I have described how I carried out data collection, interviewing 18 men in three areas of Scotland. For phase one, process of abductive analysis has been described, culminating in the application of two frameworks to analyse the data - structural violence and biographical disruption. Additionally, I have described how following the COVID-19 lockdown in 2020, I entered phase two of this study. This used data from lived experience research in order to explore the perspectives of policy actors on lived experience being used in policy making and advocacy. Data was collected using online interviews, with nine policy actors being interviewed - these interviews were also analysed thematically. In this chapter I have also addressed the ethical considerations of the project and reflexivity on my identity as a researcher, considering how my age, gender and past work influenced the research process. In the following chapter I will introduce you to the participants from phase one of this study.

4 Participant biographies

This research would not have been possible without the men in Scotland who gave their time and energy to conveying their experiences of food insecurity. As it is their stories which are central to this thesis, and as described in Chapter Three, they are co-creators of knowledge, I would like you to get to know the people behind the narratives and photographs, which you will be presented with in the following two findings chapters.

Initially I will introduce you to the seven men (using pseudonyms) who I had an initial meeting with but whom, for various different reasons, did not undertake the interview. I will then move on to introduce the 18 men who undertook both the initial meeting and the interview, whose stories will feature more prominently in these pages.

Nick, 43 years old, does not have a partner and has been unemployed for six months. He previously trained and worked as a chef. He lives in council rented accommodation.

Colin, 62 years old, does not have a partner and described himself as being retired after being dismissed by his previous employer. He lives in council rented accommodation.

Ryan, 21 years old, who is attending college in order to obtain his Higher qualifications. He has recently moved into a council rented flat and has a partner who lives in another country.

Jamie, is 48 years old, does not have a partner and is currently unemployed. He lives in council rented accommodation.

Callum, did not wish to provide his date of birth but described himself as being in his early 40s. He does not have a partner and occasionally does labouring when the opportunity arises. He lives in council rented accommodation.

Phillip is 45, he does not have a partner and works part-time on a zero-hour contract in the hospitality sector. He lives in council rented accommodation.

Ben is 47, he does not have a partner and is currently unemployed. He lives in a council rented flat and has multiple chronic illnesses which limit his mobility. I was unable to meet Ben to carry out the interview due to a bout of illness followed by COVID-19 restrictions being implemented. He lives in council rented accommodation.

I will now introduce the 18 men who participated in both the initial meeting and following interview. It is predominantly their experiences and perspectives which you will see presented in the following two chapters.

Keith is 47 years old and lives alone following the death of his wife a few years ago. He has one child who lives in a different part of the UK with family members due to their more stable financial position. Having previously worked in different countries, he is currently trying to focus on college to retrain in the health and social care area. He described himself as having no real friends where he stays now but he does occasionally go to church. He lives in council rented accommodation now, following several years in temporary accommodation in a bedsit.

Paul is 31 years old; he lives in private rented accommodation along with a roommate. He has recently begun dating 2 months ago. He previously experienced relationship breakdown and job loss in a 9-month period. He has since changed sectors and now is in full time employment now as a support worker.

Cameron is 39 years old and does not have a partner. His children live with his ex-partner. He has mostly been unemployed (other than a 2-month contract) for just over a year following redundancy. He was homeless and living in his car until moving into a flat at the beginning of the year (2019), he now lives in council rented accommodation.

Ashtak is 28 years old, he does not have a partner and is currently living in temporary accommodation. Having come to Scotland to study for a Master's degree he was unable to return home when his home country became unsafe. He does not have a partner and currently resides in a home placement which was arranged through a charity.

Fraser is 45 years old and is a father to five children who he co-parents with his ex-partner. He lives alone with his dog. He has had significant health issues which have required surgery to manage. Fraser is unemployed and lives in a council flat.

Greg is 37 years old, he emigrated to Scotland to maintain contact with his children after his ex-partner relocated. He lives alone and does not have a partner. He is now in a council rented flat, but this has taken several years, including time spent in temporary accommodation in a bed and breakfast. He is in long term recovery from an accident which left him hospitalised.

Kevin is 56 years old and does not have a partner. He lives in council rented accommodation. He is currently unemployed but was pleased that his voucher from participating would enable him to free up money for a bus fare to attend an interview.

Struan is 48 years old and does not have a partner. He works part time in his first job in 10 years with contracted hours, and also volunteers with a charity. Following two years in a council provided bed and breakfast he now lives in council rented accommodation.

Scott is 51 years old; he does not have a partner and lives alone. He has experienced food insecurity a couple of times in his life. A few years ago, he navigated being made homeless following the breakdown of his marriage. He now lives in accommodation rented through a housing association and is looking to get into volunteering following a prolonged period of unemployment.

Gary is 52 years old. He is currently living in temporary accommodation and does not have a partner. He has college qualifications in social care and mental

health but is currently unemployed. Gary described living with three chronic illnesses which leave him in chronic pain.

Edward is 59 years old and lives alone after his divorce 10 years ago. He has been unemployed for 6 months but previously worked as a driver and in the food sector. He owns his flat.

John is 58 years old and does not have a partner. He has grown-up children who live in other parts of the country. He described having multiple chronic conditions which contributed to his medical retirement 6 years prior. He lives in council rented accommodation.

James is 50 years old and does not have a partner. He has 10 children, 6 of which are biologically his, he is currently in a custody dispute with his ex-wife. He was made unemployed around 2 weeks prior to our first meeting and is currently living in a council rented flat.

Mark is 36 years old, and he shares custody of his two children with his ex-partner. He previously trained and worked as a chef however is currently unemployed. Mark lives with chronic illness which includes chronic pain, making maintaining employment challenging. Mark lives in council rented accommodation.

Joseph did not wish to provide his date of birth but described himself as being in his late 40s. He does not have a partner and currently lives alone. He owns his home and occasionally generates income through having a lodger. He has been vegan for multiple decades and enjoys growing food in his garden.

Michael is 48 years old; he lives with his 5-year-old daughter and has a partner who lives elsewhere. Michael lives in a one-bedroom flat which he privately rents. He is unemployed and lives with chronic illness as well as being in recovery for substance misuse.

Tim is 63 years old and does not have a partner. He was his mother's full-time carer until she had to go into care, and he lives in a house he described as

“transferred to him” following his mother’s death. He is employed part-time at a supermarket.

Brandon is 54 years old. He does not have a partner and lives alone. He has depression and a chronic illness which affects his daily activities. He is currently unemployed and lives in a house he owns.

The following two chapters will present the findings resulting from the narratives and photographs shared by the men to whom you have been briefly introduced.

5 Food insecurity: an outcome of structural violence

5.1 Overview of Chapter

This chapter explores the ways in which men experiencing food insecurity encounter, and are affected by, structural violence. This chapter considers socio-political processes and economic conditions affecting participants, and the physical and psychological effects these had on participants. This is explored through analysis of how men perceive the structural drivers of food insecurity and how they describe this affecting their everyday lives. Following definition of structural violence, relevant literature is discussed before detailed exploration of how food insecurity and other consequences of poverty, such as debt and cold homes, provide insights on the lived experience of structural violence for participants. The empirical findings presented illustrate how food insecurity can be understood as an outcome of structural violence, the men's accounts providing insights into the lived experience of conditions resultant from the hostile social and economic context. The data presented in this chapter contributes to answering the following research questions:

1. What are single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland?
ii) How do men describe the impact of being food insecure, and the associated coping mechanisms, on their everyday life?
2. What are single men's perceptions of the causes/drivers of their food insecurity?
i) What are the drivers of food insecurity that emerge from men's accounts?

5.2 Structural violence

5.2.1 Defining structural violence

As outlined earlier in the thesis, structural violence can be understood as the social, political, and economic structures and processes which keep individuals from meeting their basic needs, termed needs-deprivation. Basic needs are

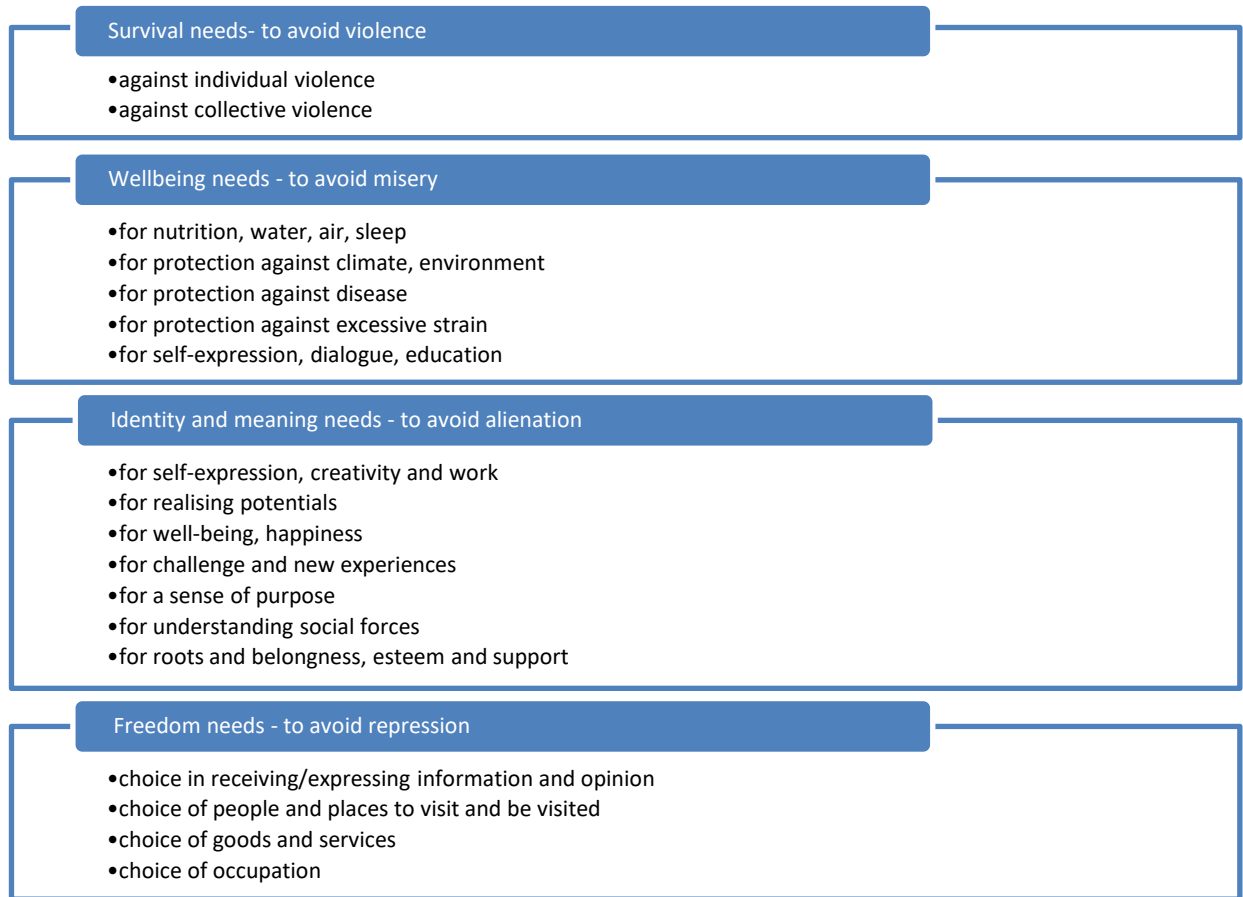


Figure 5-1: Basic needs as outlined by Galtung (1969)

understood to be “something that has to be satisfied at least to some extent in order to function as a human being” (Galtung, 1978, p. 7). These needs fall into four classes according to Galtung (1996, p. 197): survival needs, well-being needs, identity and meaning needs, and freedom needs (Figure 5-1: Basic needs as outlined by Galtung (1969)). Where these needs are not met, harm results - with repercussions of violence, misery, alienation, and repression. In the experience of food insecurity, people may experience wellbeing needs deprivation through lack of adequate nutrition (section 2.6.2), freedom needs deprivation through a lack of choice in goods (section 2.6.3) and identity and meaning needs deprivation through lack of belonging (section 2.6.5).

The concept of structural violence has been used to describe the harms social systems can have, with intersecting identities based on race, gender, class, sexuality, ability and age affecting the particular ways in which individuals are

impacted by structures and processes in society (Crenshaw, 1991). The inability to meet basic needs is the result of these processes working in the ways they are designed to operate, meaning the infliction of harm is embedded in these structures (Galtung, 1969). That is to say these harms are not unfortunate side effects of such policies and processes, but that these functions are deliberately designed into policies/institutions/social structures.

Social inequalities based on race, gender, class and ethnicity are constructed so that individual behaviour choices are constrained, structurally limited and conditioned (Farmer, 2003). The concept of structural violence does not assign individual responsibility, rather it increases our understanding of how social experiences are inherently shaped through structural processes such as governance, and the political and cultural context (Muderedzi *et al.*, 2017). It is analogous to understanding health inequalities (and the resultant differences in life expectancy) through the lens of social determinants rather than focussing on individual behaviours (Braveman and Gottlieb, 2014).

When basic needs are not met, Galtung (1969) has suggested that two broad categories of social disintegration can occur - freezing or boiling. Freezing describes the development of apathy and a lack of participation in society from those who are not having their basic needs met. Boiling describes protest and revolt from those not having their needs met. Individuals who experience harm from structures and processes (structural violence) may experience social disintegration (freezing/boiling) which can contribute to exposure to harms. I am using Galtung's needs-deprivation framework helps to conceptualise the variety of ways in which structural violence impacts on the men in this study. Drawing on other literature which builds on Galtung to include more social dimensions, such as the psycho-social harms encompassed in the concept of social-suffering (Jones and McCormack, 2015; Rylko-Bauer and Farmer, 2016). This acknowledges the lived experience of distress and injustice and through combining the needs-deprivation framework and social suffering provides a useful context for understanding the variety of outcomes that affect men in Scotland who are experiencing food insecurity as a result of structural violence.

5.2.2 Invisible violence

Structural violence is an often invisible form of violence which despite its opacity, results in physical harm and emotional distress (Roberts, 2009). Unlike physical violence, which is more readily observable, structural violence is insidious and stems from social structures and processes which are less readily observable and often go unacknowledged - through either unawareness or choice. The most extreme manifestation of this is described by Galtung:

Structural violence is silent, it does not show - it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters. In a static society, personal violence will be registered, whereas structural violence may be seen as about as natural as the air around us. (Galtung, 1996, p. 173)

Farmer (1996) suggests that structural violence is able to evade observation due to three main factors. These are 1) the suffering it causes is often experienced by culturally 'remote' groups, 2) suffering is hard to quantify and, 3) it can be prohibitively difficult to describe the complexity of the interweaving of personal biographies with the larger tapestry of the socio-political. Jones and McCormack (2015) add that another less visible aspect of structural violence is the "corrosive" influence it has in terms of shaping public support and acceptance of the policies and practices which will be explored in more detail later in this chapter.

5.2.3 Food insecurity and structural violence

Food insecurity can be considered an outcome of structural violence (Booth and Pollard, 2020). Galtung said "if people are starving when this is objectively avoidable then violence is committed" (1969, p. 171). Whether the lack of access to food is caused by a situation such as siege, where there is an identifiable perpetrator, or if it is the result of the economic structures, where a perpetrator is not as readily identifiable, both are acts of violence (Galtung, 1969). Structural intersectionality suggests how individuals sharing a common, or multiple common identities can experience particular harms as a consequence of

discriminatory structures in society (Crenshaw, 1991), with harms such as economic marginalisation and unemployment previously identified (Ou Jin Lee and Brotman, 2013). In the UK, and other high-income countries, the primary driver of food insecurity at the individual level (outlined in Chapter One) is inadequate income, which results from political decisions and policies. These political and policy choices create the economic conditions to sustain inadequate income through stalling wages, rising living costs and inadequate welfare payments (HC/HL Deb, 2022). It is these conditions that result in the inability to access and afford a sufficient quantity or quality of food, contributing to needs-deprivation (Galtung, 1969) across welfare, identity and freedom needs, as described in section 5.2.1.

Understanding both the physical, social and symbolic importance of food is key within this argument (Fischler, 1988). Food is socially important in terms of its links to identity and culture. The hunger associated with food insecurity in high income countries has previously been described as “the violence of hunger in the midst of plenty” (Brown, 1989). In wealthy democracies where hunger is caused by a failure to distribute “national abundance” in a way which ensures every citizen has sufficient access to food, it is a choice made by government to deprive their citizens. Booth and Pollard (2020), describes such policy failure as food crimes, where countries fail to implement measures to protect the human right to food, thus subverting ‘standards of decency’ (2020, p. 87).

The operationalisation of structural violence as a factor in the experience of food insecurity has been explored in a range of empirical research, establishing the utility of the concept in interpreting qualitative accounts of lived experience of food insecurity. Studies of marginalised communities in the US experiencing food insecurity have drawn on structural violence to elucidate their perspectives and highlight the drivers of their situation, the deprivation of their agency and the exacerbation of stigma (Whittle *et al.*, 2015; Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019). Johnson *et al.* (2019) explored how structural violence contributed to the food insecurity of young, formerly homeless adults, in San Francisco. This photovoice study identified insufficient funding from Government Assistance Programmes, restricted access to affordable food outlets and restrictive food policies by employers to be particularly important contributors. Additionally,

they found stigma to play a role in food insecurity and structural violence, with the same hierarchies creating structural violence contributing to the stigmatisation and devalued social identities of the marginalised youths. Whittle *et al.*'s (2015) interview study focused on people on low income living with HIV who experience food insecurity as the result of area-level gentrification which had led to significant rent increases. Participants described being pushed into indignity, shame and poor health whilst trying to obtain food. These two studies exemplify the three factors which ensure structural violence evades observation (Farmer, 2003): the groups affected were marginalised (formerly homeless and those living with HIV); experiences were difficult to quantify (experiencing devalued social identities or the effect of being pushed into indignity); and disentangling individual biographies from the socio-political context is challenging, given the focus in these studies on a range of social issues including housing policy, health policy, rental markets, gentrification, and government assistance.

Wider theoretical literature, and some empirical work, also draws attention to the ways that the systemic and structural drivers can be traced in qualitative accounts of food insecurity. Empirical studies in varied contexts - Australia (Lindberg *et al.*, 2022), New Zealand (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2014) and the UK (Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020) - explore how food, welfare and other support services are on-the-ground settings through which structural violence is enacted and experienced. Lindberg *et al.* (2020) suggest that accusations of structural violence can be levelled at the "government funders, food sector donors and charity operators that have made the decisions that ultimately lead to potentially harmful nutritional outcomes for the people who require these services to survive" (p.9). Whilst Bruck and Garthwaite (2020) identify how within food banks "rules originating from economic and bureaucratic pressures can establish barriers to accessing essential material resources" (p.147). These studies demonstrate how the actions of welfare and support services are driven by higher level pressures, but nevertheless the result is sites of support also being sites of harm. Taken together these studies indicate the importance of not only considering the origins of food insecurity in terms of structural violence in analysing qualitative accounts of food insecurity, but also the various sites in which it can be produced.

Structural violence supports the analysis of men's accounts of food insecurity through looking at the processes and structures that contributed to their needs-deprivation and their lived experience of this. The rest of this chapter will outline participants' experiences of food insecurity, and how these can be conceptualised in relation to structural violence (focussing on financial constraints resulting from macro-level determinants, and interactions with institutions), exploring where this exposure is inscribed in participants narratives as harms (Rylko-Bauer and Farmer, 2016).

5.2.4 Systems and processes of structural violence

Participants experienced structural violence across a variety of institutions and processes. This section will explore participants' experiences of and perspectives on their interactions with the social security system in relation to their food insecurity, including the resultant biopsychosocial harms they described. Financial insecurity resulting from interaction with social security processes was a significant issue for participants, supporting previous work which has shown the social security system to be a driver of food insecurity (Chapter Two). Only three of the 18 participants interviewed were in employment, with the rest receiving social security payments as their main source of income. The welfare system and its institutional interfaces were identified as a prominent source of insecurity and frustration for participants, with financial insecurity derived from issues with the social security system frequently discussed. A common theme across accounts is the inevitability of being negatively impacted through engagement with the social security system. This indicated that the social security system was a site of structural violence for participants, with the implementation of UC (Figure 5-2: What is Universal Credit?) a particular issue which resulted in harms for participants. Men articulated how the features of the process for obtaining UC influenced their lived experience and needs deprivation, in particular they cited the five-week wait; imposition of sanctions; and the inflexibility of the system.

Figure 5-2: What is Universal Credit?

Universal Credit was incrementally implemented as a UK-wide social security benefit to replace six benefits into one payment (Employment and Support Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit, Working Tax Credit, Child Tax Credit, and Income Support). For new claimants, Universal Credit was completed in Scotland in December 2018 with those already in receipt of at least one of the benefits listed above due to move to Universal Credit by the end of 2023. Universal Credit received widespread criticism for a variety of reasons including changing to monthly payments and moving the claiming process exclusively online. The main criticism however came due to the minimum five-week wait before receiving payment. The minimum five-week wait refers to a period where claimants either do not receive income or must apply for an advanced payment. This time consists of a seven-day waiting period from the point of application and a month assessment period. In practice, many claimants wait longer than five weeks to receive payment, particularly during initial roll out when administrative issues caused significant delays. This delay has been associated with an increase in debt (Drake, 2017) and an increase in food bank use (Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019) which was acknowledged in the UK House of Commons by Amber Rudd during her time as The Secretary of State for Work and Pensions (HC/HL Deb, 2019). Universal Credit represents a significant change for claimants, with changes in terms of application, conditions attached to receipt and how it is paid.

5.2.5 From the outset: navigating forms and wait times

Difficulties in the navigation of the application process for UC, and the harms resultant from it, were dominant in participants' narratives. Men articulated the range of ways that obtaining UC influenced their lived experiences and needs deprivation, including in the completion of the relevant paperwork, suspicion regarding the motivations of institutions, and the waiting period after applying.

The difficulties embedded in the paperwork for applying for UC were highlighted by John who described filling out the forms required to access payments:

Well, I wouldn't say it takes a lot of effort, it's just confusing at the time, it's just when you fill a form in for benefits, they ask you the same question maybe two or three times, but they word different. Whether they're trying to trip you up or not I don't know.
-John, 58, Glasgow area, medically retired

For John, this process was not demanding in terms of the labour involved in filling out the form, but he described the content as often being bewildering, with what seemed to be the repetition of some questions. The implication of what John said was that these were written this way by design. Those who constructed the questions were deliberately trying to reduce the likelihood that applicants would meet the requirements to be approved. In his account John conveyed a sense of suspicion around the potential for applicants to select inconsistent answers that might render them ineligible for support, believing the application form to be needlessly disorientating.

John's suspicions regarding the form, and those designing it, is indicative of a wider distrust of those in power and institutions, such as the UK Government Department for Work and Pension (DWP), which permeated most interviews with participants. For example, Kevin suggested that his treatment was representative of those in receipt of social security payments:

What they do to everyone, you know, they just want to cut that money to the bare minimum

-Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

He implied his experience was not unusual, that the UK Government DWP was acting deliberately to make the process as detrimental as possible to claimants, leaving individuals without sufficient income, resulting in an inability to meet their basic needs. Gary further indicated his distrust when describing attending an assessment for Employment Support Allowance where he found it:

Dodgy that the guy who interviewed me was listening in to my conversation with security guy

-Gary, 52, Edinburgh, unemployed

Gary's use of the word "dodgy" suggests that he found this to be a dishonest practice, contributing to his distrust of the process.

The five-week wait is in-built in the application process for UC and was a driver of the needs-deprivation experienced by participants. This feature of the process was directly associated with causing financial hardship in accounts. James described his experience:

Well, I was doing okay, up until two years ago. Then, I was taken off Jobseeker's and put onto UC, because they take any change of circumstances as an excuse to shove you onto UC. Then, we [my wife and I] separated and got divorced. Instead of it being, like a married couple's sign [on], it went to a singles, and that's when my problems started. The five-week waiting period. That, straightaway, put me into debt, with kind of like, my energy, kind of like my gas and my electric.

-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

James described being moved on to UC as a single adult, and therefore a new claimant, so subject to a five-week waiting period. He described his change in circumstances (the breakdown of his marriage) being used as "an excuse" to restrict payments, suggesting mistrust of the process and those who enact it. The use of "shove" indicates the perceived forcefulness in these decisions, at a time when he was experiencing the destabilising impact of a divorce. The change to social security access, happening as a direct consequence of a disruptive life event, indicates how the structural and the individual are

intertwined - with the potential for serious negative outcomes. Decisions made at a structural level result in some people not having sufficient funds to live. Some participants were able to access an Advance Payment, which would subsequently be deducted when they began receiving their regular payments, however for James he received no advanced income at this key time. This led to acute financial hardship and the accumulation of debt, leading to longer term financial hardship for James and others moved on to UC:

I was on meters at the time, so it was like, they don't tell you that there's at least five charges on the meter. You've got the normal charge, the surcharge, and then you've got the rental charge, and then two other charges that they don't say, it's some technical name they've got, that I can't afford, like, so then again, I'm behind again.

-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

James identified some of the hidden costs he was affected by through being reliant on a pay as you go meter. The poverty he was living in, was exacerbated by expensive fuel costs which required ongoing payment, whilst waiting to receive his UC payment. The multiple charges, which were objectively avoidable as those who pay by direct debit are subject to a lesser number of charges, reduce the resources available, resulting in harm.

The five-week wait time was the minimum time individuals could expect to wait to receive income from UC. This process was embedded in applying for UC, and participants linked this aspect of the policy with being unable to meet their basic needs.

And then, this time, I mean, I'd got things sorted out a bit, you know, so I was okay, I had electricity, I had enough for food. And then they moved me onto this [taps picture of UC letter]. And straightaway, it was five weeks with no money, boom, take that. So, you're back to nothing, again.

- Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

For Kevin, the move to UC and the associated five-week wait resulted in the undoing of his careful budgeting. He was able to manage basic needs sufficiently on his previous benefit, and able to afford food and electricity. However, he was unable to save any money meaning the five-week wait rendered him destitute.

The five-week wait was spoken about by participants in terms of an inevitability - the best that they could expect with many having to wait longer- of moving on to this system, something built into it. Additionally, assigning or indication of responsibility for their experiences permeates accounts, as indicated by Kevin's account above as well as in John's -indication that the form may be deliberately ambiguous and James' statement that 'they take any excuse'.

Drawn together the accounts of men's hardship and exacerbation of their suffering through engagement with the Welfare system reflects how structural violence is enacted in current UK context. The men's accounts echo similar findings from research undertaken with UC recipients in England (Patrick, 2017; Cheetham *et al.*, 2019), with economic hardship embedded in through the process of applying for UC (Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019). The system purports to support people, but in reality is often an adversarial process, which is violent by design, resulting in serious detrimental impacts on individuals' bodies and minds, as well as their socio-economic provisions.

5.2.6 An ongoing process: conditionality, sanctioning and deductions

Participants' negative descriptions of receiving UC and other social security payments were often linked to being reliant on a system which operated in ways that were detrimental to their daily lives. Men described the conditional welfare arrangements put in place and the penalties, known as sanctions, which involved reduction or cessation of payments for a period if they did not meet them. The incremental introduction of UC in 2013 was coupled with a move towards increased conditionality in the UK, and harsher penalties for those unable to meet the required conditions (Drake, 2017). UC has seen sanctions become consecutive rather than concurrent, causing a cumulative effect of harms. Claimants will inevitably find themselves with reduced or no income (depending whether or not they are in employment) as a result of the five-week wait, however many also find themselves in the same position subsequently as a result of the conditionality embedded in the social security system (Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019).

A small number of men reflected on the injustice of increased conditionality, with Kevin providing a particularly detailed account. The photograph below, taken by Kevin shows a letter he received after “failing” to attend one meeting with his advisor due to mental health issues. The letter indicates both the maximum he is theoretically entitled to (£317.82), the amount he was normally receiving (£190.70) and what he would be receiving for that month after not attending one appointment (£0).



Figure 5-3: Photograph of Universal Credit Letter taken by Kevin

Zero, yeah, thanks, that was three months of that, just for missing one appointment. So that's why I took that picture, just, these guys [points to GOV.UK} have just decided that people can basically starve and have no electricity.

Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

Kevin’s description of his payment reflects his construction of it as resultant from a deliberate decision, made by an identifiable agent- “these guys” (UK Government), the second time in his narrative that he made it clear where he assigned responsibility. This sanction had devastating consequences which left him unable to meet his wellbeing needs. The letter demonstrates the multiple ways harm is embedded in the process of receiving UC. Firstly it comes as the result of conditionality, his months of no income were a deliberate punishment representing a repressive approach (Power and Small, 2021). The zero is emboldened and the largest font size on the page, a jarring juxtaposition

compared to the size of the value which represents the standard allowance.

Secondly, deductions were an issue. For example, Kevin was receiving £190, over £100 less than the standard allowance. Kevin explained this reduction:

Apparently, I owe the Inland Revenue money, I don't know why, but I do. I don't know, they say I do, so, whatever. And for the five week wait, I had to borrow money, and that's coming off this amount. And, what else...rent arrears, that I got in in the five weeks...it just goes on and on.
-Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

The five-week wait, described above, and associated advanced payment resulted in Kevin receiving significantly lower monthly payments each month. This was in addition to an outstanding Inland Revenue debt from many years ago (when he last worked), that he was unaware of. This is indicative of the high levels of surveillance those in receipt of social security payments are under, described as the “disciplinary state” by Power and Small (2021). His use of “they say I do, so, whatever”, implies a sense of resignation to the inevitability of the processes he is subjected to. Although he does not know why he owes this money, he is still forced to repay it to the detriment of his ability to afford essentials such as food and electricity. Such debt repayment is built into the process of receiving social security, dragging participants into further hardship.

While Kevin provided the most detailed account of the extreme financial hardship resultant from sanctions and deductions, others referred to the ongoing repercussions of reductions to payments, with fear of being sanctioned common amongst participants. Kevin missed the meeting due to symptoms associated with his diagnosed depression, however health conditions are not considered a valid exemption, despite acknowledgement from the UK DWP that sanctions may exacerbate health conditions (Figure 5-4: Sanctions and health). The DWP serve as arbiters of the impact of a health condition on an individual, rather the person who lives day to day with their condition. Only if more harm than average would be caused does the Department for Work and Pensions consider Hardship Payments admissible, indicating they accept harm as part of their processes.

The DWP have recognised that sanctioning may exacerbate health conditions. The Decision Makers Guide associated with hardship payments for Job Seekers Allowance advised: ‘the [decision maker] must consider if a (sanctioned) person with a medical condition would suffer a greater decline in health than a normal healthy adult (in similar circumstances)’ and also it is recognised that ‘It would be usual for a normal healthy adult to suffer some deterioration in their health if they were without essential items, such as food, clothing, heating and accommodation or sufficient money to buy essential items for a period of two weeks’ and followed up with a large appendix listing medical conditions by whether or not they would be exacerbated by lack of access to essential items (DWP, 2020). This indicates that the harms caused by conditionality and the associated sanctions are an approved component of the social security system in the UK.

Figure 5-4: Sanctions and health

5.2.6.1 Legacy benefits

Whilst conditionality has increased with UC, it has been a feature of the social security system for much longer. The majority of participants in receipt of social security payments were in receipt of UC, however two participants described being in receipt of legacy benefits. Within these, both experienced difficulties receiving their entitlement after having to go for health assessments:

I’m still on ESA, had to go for health assessments so went with my support worker. The guy who interviewed me initially spoke to my support worker like I wasn’t there, asking how I got to the appointment and stuff like that. Initially I was only getting £73 per week and by the time it actually got sorted out I was heavy into my overdraft. It took months to get sorted.

-Gary, 52, Edinburgh, unemployed

And the nice people, cough, cough, at the Department of Work and Pensions needn’t necessarily be beneficial to my health, let us say. And I’m sure there may be one or two other people who might concur. I had to put forward an appeal against, oh, what do they call it, where they go

and do a health assessment? Aye, an assessment. And I got a report back with a whole score of zero, yes, and for me to be maintained on the benefit that I was on and currently am back onto. You needed a score of 12. Now, I'm not saying that the person on the other side of the table might not have told the whole truth. I'm not saying that she didn't tell the truth at all, but through the process of appeal, which is quite daunting, nerve-wracking, scary, you call it what you want, I was able, with a great deal of support from various organisations, to revoke the medical report. Having scored zero points, aye, and then getting my benefit penalised, because when you perform an appeal you are penalised by 25 per cent or something like that. Aye, then the finances went all to pot.

-Brandon, 54, Edinburgh, unemployed

Both men experienced difficulty navigating the assessment process, requiring outside support in order to receive their full entitlement. The time taken to sort out this process resulted in debt accrual for Gary and resulted in financial difficulties for Brandon. The appeal process for Brandon was 'daunting', and required significant support from outside organisations, and he was required to live on a reduced income during the appeals process. Whilst many of the participants attributed their food insecurity to issues related to UC, it is important to note that those receiving legacy benefits, are also harmed by social security processes, particularly when they are in receipt of payments related to their health.

These accounts further highlight the theme of assigning responsibility. Brandon's sardonic use of 'the nice people' highlights the impact to his life of the distal DWP. However, it also reflects the need to be viewed favourably by the DWP, whilst they treat claimants with contempt and suspicion. This is indicative of the loss of agency experiences by claimants, who are stripped of power and treated with little empathy in this bureaucratic machinery (Tyler, 2020). Gary identifies the more proximal staff member who 'spoke...like I wasn't there'. Participants construct these decisions as deliberate, with little consideration for the harm they might cause, and in Brandon's case, a suspicion that deliberate harm is perhaps the intention.

The men in this study offered clear identification of the processes which resulted in their needs deprivation and some specifically named who they

considered responsible, who using the framework of structural violence would be considered the perpetrator. The UK Government and/or the DWP; and those who represented these agencies, were constructed in accounts as actively conspiring to make harmful decisions impacting participants' wellbeing. The form in which support is delivered, often UC, and the mechanisms which enable this (the 5-week wait and conditionality) were identified as contributing to needs-deprivation. Accounts were permeated with expressions of distrust, disdain, and frustration however participants were ultimately accepting of their reality, accepting it as an inevitability in the face of being powerless to change it. Analysis of the men's accounts suggests the multiple ways that processes embedded in the social security system, and particularly the system of UC, interact with challenging lived experiences - such as relationship breakdown, death, and ill health - to compound the impact on individuals. Across accounts, there is a clear and unsettling juxtaposition between the system which is violent, uncaring and very actively harmful by design whilst having an outward facing veneer of providing support to those who need.

5.2.7 Employment: uncertainty and risk

Men's accounts also featured references to the labour market, and their experiences of precarious employment, resultant from the economic and political climate. At the time of interview three participants were in paid employment (one full-time, two part-time) however for several participants, insecure and/or low paid employment had been a feature of their working lives. For both those currently employed and those previously employed, there were aspects of instability associated with their employment that they discussed in relation to their experiences of food insecurity.

Keith described two previous jobs, one working in a supermarket and one working for a pizza company as a delivery driver:

I got employed at Asda part-time and really from then on, my journey of employment in three years: I was working part-time, I had been struggling, I had been buying discounted food from the delicatessen and just basically what was left over from the ravishing of the public coming

in and getting their deals - obviously they're [the public] first, so you have to prioritise and put them first. So, I was always at the back of the queue for food when I worked at Asda.

-Keith, 47, Aberdeen, student

The supermarket where Keith worked part-time did not provide sufficient income for him to be food secure. A coping strategy employed to manage life on a low income was to buy food which had been reduced. However, as staff had to give customers first access to reduced food there was very little left for him to choose from. This instability led to him taking up another part-time job which he felt would be better, particularly as when on shift he was able to access a meal.

Then from there I moved, funnily enough, to Pizza Hut Delivery Express to get a job where I could possibly do better and ended up on low hours.

-Keith, 47, Aberdeen, student

Keith's account of his work is also discussed in terms of his food insecurity. The decision to change jobs for stability, turned out to be more detrimental to his food insecurity as he was given less hours than he had anticipated. This resulted in both lower pay and having less opportunity to access the free meal associated with working a shift. This indicates the precarity of being reliant on part-time work, particularly work which has variable weekly hours which serves to create further uncertainty.

The potential instability of employment was described by Struan whose experience of short-term work led to homelessness:

I was working through an agency at a factory in [redacted English town]. and that ended when they changed the agency and at that point, they'd introduced UC into [redacted English town]. So, I was put on that, and I was literally six weeks waiting for first payments and my landlord was not willing to wait six weeks for money, so he asked me to leave.

-Struan, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed

The combination of the termination of agency work and the move to UC and associated wait time left him unable to pay his rent and ultimately being evicted, leaving him unable to meet wellbeing needs. The reliance on insecure

working hours and insecure contracts, components of an unjust labour market, contributed to participants being unable to meet their basic needs both whilst in employment, and upon being made unemployed.

Precarious employment was also discussed by Struan at our initial meeting. In his current employment, he described being on a very low hour contract but often worked significantly more hours than contracted for. This made it difficult for him to plan and budget, with shifts often appearing or disappearing at the last minute. This was further evidenced by a last-minute rescheduling of our interview, understandably, due to the sudden opportunity to work more hours. He described how whilst he appreciated the additional hours, he felt as though he could not turn them down, particularly as he was in the probationary period of his employment and was anxious about any refusals resulting in his contract being terminated at the end of the probationary period. With a previous history of short-term employment and its long-lasting impact on his circumstances Struan discussed prioritising available working hours, well beyond his contract, thus impacting his work-life balance. The neoliberal drive to make labour markets more adaptable has led to what proponents call “flexible” but may be better characterised as precarious employment. The low hour contracts and/or short-term contracts, like those described offer little to no employment rights, leaving workers at risk, contributing to a psychosocial burden in addition to financial precarity (Schrecker and Bambra, 2015). In this way, individuals with less power have control over their own lives reduced by those with the most power, with the element of ‘choice’ weighted towards those in charge.

The interaction of the social security system with seeking employment was also described by some participants. James described how trying to obtain work whilst on UC was made particularly difficult by trial periods:

Yesterday, I received a phone call from the housing lady [saying] UC didn't pay this months, or she said they haven't paid. But on my journal, it says they've paid, but they've paid less. Because I got part-time work, and I was only working a month, because every company gives you, like a month's trial. Now, I got paid twice in that month because the company pays fortnightly. But UC gets it into their head, that you're paid monthly.
-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

James' account highlighted the failure of a bureaucratic system such as UC to take into account a non-standard payment instalment by an employer. The result was that James ended up in debt, and in arrears on his rent. Rather than the move to UC supporting James into employment, it had the opposite impact. He became wary of attending trials for jobs as it had introduced further financial insecurity to his day-to-day life.

I've never been hit with sanctions, touch wood but I feel that I have, because I'm getting nothing this month, it feels like I've been sanctioned just for taking part-time work to make my living standards better...I had an argument with my work coach because of it... they don't see that you're not getting anything, you're getting further into debt.

-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

By adhering to the conditionality associated with his UC, James was pushed into further debt, exacerbating his food insecurity. This creates a situation where finding employment comes with the risk of exacerbating food insecurity but not seek working leads to sanctions, also exacerbating food insecurity. This type of bureaucracy contributes to the feelings of inevitability and instability permeating men's narratives, with individuals who need support recast as individuals to be treated with suspicion.

The accounts in this section so far show the vulnerability of the men to a system that is not supportive of them gaining adequate quality employment, and at the individual level involves multiple trade-offs reflective of their vulnerability within both a hostile labour market and welfare system. The hostile labour market potentially leaves them vulnerable to exploitative working practices due to fear of losing the work, or negatively affecting their financial situation by conflicting with their social security payments.

Whilst participants reported frequent issues caused by obtaining UC, resulting in financial insecurity for many, one participant who was employed on a 16-hour contract with a supermarket, described how his employment initially left him in a more financially unstable position than he had been previously. Having cared

for his elderly mother for a number of years until her death around 2 years earlier, his carer's allowance had stopped. The change from being a carer for his elderly mother to him moving into the labour market after her death, resulted in him no longer receiving tax credits, something which he relied upon to be able to pay his council tax. Tim seemed frustrated by this:

Yeah, I wasn't working, so the financial situation changed from being a carer dramatically. Income plummeted; One, tax credits were stopped which I am entitled ... the tax credits were worth about thirtyish pounds a week.

-Tim, 63, Glasgow, part time employed

He mentioned needing to make many phone calls to try and establish his eligibility to maintain his finances. However, despite repeated calls and assurances, in the end his tax credit payment was removed, seemingly due to the end of his probationary period and a related hourly wage increase. This increase left him in a worse financial position due to the loss of his tax credits equating to a reduction in income of approximately £120 a month. His use of the word "plummeted" indicates what a sizeable decline in income this represented to him. This demonstrates how even whilst working, individuals experience financial instability related to a social security system that is often challenging to navigate. Tim described substantial effort and time-labour in trying to adhere to the systems in place but despite this 'adherence' he was still in a position where his desire to work had resulted in him earning less money, exacerbating his food insecurity. Additionally, he also described how at the time, overtime was not readily available within the company in order to make up the money lost, making it challenging to improve his financial situation.

Employment was described more positively by one participant. Paul stated that employment had started to provide relief from his food insecurity. He had previously been made redundant, a factor that pushed him towards experiencing food insecurity. More recently he had obtained a new full-time job, and for a time continued to still experience food insecurity related to the debt accrued during unemployment and a relationship breakdown. However, he described how just before payday recently he had had an unwelcome reminder of when his food insecurity was more severe, when he counted his last remaining “shrapnel”.



Figure 5-5: Photograph of loose change taken by Paul

Here we go, that's, that the scurrying around for the change in the last couple of days before pay day to see what food you can buy, yes, that's what that is. Yes, that's not fun, that's really not fun.

-Paul, 31, Aberdeen, full time employed

Despite being in a more financially stable situation than the majority of the sample, Paul was still enduring some of the impacts of his previous insecurity. However, he was hopeful that once the rest of his debt was cleared, he would be able to maintain a status quo he is comfortable with and discussed his hope of being able to live somewhere without flatmates in the future. Paul was

unusual within the sample; he was the only participant who had previously been in full-time employment and who had regained full-time employment in the last year. The nature of his employment, stable full-time hours, allowed him to begin paying off debts, and contributed to feelings of hope for a more financially secure future. Paul was the only participant who expressed a belief that his future would be more financially stable, and that he would transition out of food insecurity in the future. This demonstrates how when there are opportunities for sufficient working hours, in stable employment, there are opportunities for people to thrive and believe in a future where their needs are met.

The majority of accounts related to employment demonstrated that even when participants were working, thus endeavouring to meet the expectations of hard work embedded in subverting the narratives of “scroungers” and “shirkers”, they still lack the power to overcome the structural problems within the system which leaves them unable to meet their basic needs. In the context of precarious employment, UC failed to facilitate a return to work, creating situations where participants were effectively penalised for finding employment. The neoliberal drive towards “flexible” labour has contributed to a labour market that puts people at risk of financial difficulties leading to needs deprivation. Both of these policy interventions (allowing for zero hours contracts and UC implementation) are government interventions, designed by policy makers and politicians. They work together to the detriment of claimants lives with food insecurity and other outcomes of poverty, the result, leaving individuals reliant on navigating the landscape of support services to try and meet their basic needs.

5.3 Managing and experiencing harm through support

Participants often required and sought support to cope with their lived experiences of food insecurity, arguably resulting from exposure to structural violence through engagement with the labour market and/or welfare system as discussed above. Although participants accessed downstream supports to mitigate harm, these supports are also part of a system which perpetuates structural violence by obscuring the ways processes prevent individuals from

meeting their basic needs, and at times serve as sites where harm is enacted. Participants described difficulty in identifying support, and upon access experiences of surveillance, precarity and selectivity were shared.

The ability to identify and access support was discussed as challenging for some participants, particularly for those who were relatively new to financial insecurity. Cameron who had worked in the oil and gas industry for a number of years prior to being made redundant:

It's really difficult to find support, you need to know what you're looking for, particularly when you don't have internet access to go searching.
-Cameron, 39, Aberdeen, unemployed

Food insecurity was frequently accompanied by a variety of other material deprivations, such as a lack of internet in Cameron's case. Having previously been employed, he had never had cause to look for support, and now he required it, it was inaccessible. Digital exclusion can make it harder to identify and access support, it also serves as a barrier to accessing social security (Holmes and Burgess, 2021).

Accessing support could be made more challenging by the employees of the support organisations:

Scott: *And then the first time I was there I had to go and sit down for half an hour because they were too busy, there was no one there but they were too busy. And then I went up and was speaking to this woman who is asking me all these questions. I didn't see the point of half the questions she was asking, all she needed to know is I'm here and the very fact that I'm here asking for this means that I should get it, just give me it, you know. But she seemed to find that important that she put me in my place and let me know that, okay you can have this but I'm watching you, kind of thing, you know.*

Kathryn: *Yes, I was going to ask how did that process, I guess, make you feel?*

Scott: *I don't want to repeat it, let's put it that way. But I am big enough in the mind to understand that she's just trying to do her job, she's got a wee bit of an ego there with her, but she's allowed. I don't mind that, I'm big enough, I can take*

it. I can look past what she is saying to me, you know. Other people can't, some people might do that once and never go back, you know.

-Scott, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Although several men made reference to food bank use, and referrals, only Scott described the referral process in detail. Scott described both being ignored and experiencing an uncomfortable level of scrutiny related to his need when trying to access a food bank referral at the job centre. His description indicates he felt an uncomfortable level of surveillance, with him leaving with a sense that he was being monitored by the person providing the referral. The implication was that he had to behave in a way that the job centre staff member found appropriate to be eligible for support. This indicates the internalisation of the power differential between the referrers and the referees, with those in charge of referring able to make choices about an individual's ability to meet their basic needs. Where individuals are not viewed in a sympathetic way, they are more likely to be left without support. The resonates with recent suggestions that support services can be an on-the-ground setting where structural violence is enacted (Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022). This type of interaction can be seen as experiencing devaluation of social identities, whereby an individual's right to a basic need is determined by whether they are deemed "worthy", a finding echoed in other food insecurity work (Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019). Scott's "I'm big enough, I can take it", suggests that he perceived this treatment as more acceptable for him, than for other people, and that as a "big" man he should be able to carry on without letting interactions like these affect him. In this he framed a demeaning situation with the potential to devalue his social identity as one which required fortitude and resilience, qualities about himself he appeared to be asserting here, and are aligned to hegemonic masculinities noted elsewhere (Scott-Samuel, 2009). This may provide insight in to not only the stigma and shame associated with food insecurity, as noted elsewhere, but how gender and identity interact and shape the experience of this stigma, particularly in support settings, where vulnerabilities seem heightened.

The potential for the job centre to refuse to provide a referral, or additional referrals, can introduce uncertainty into participants' lives and promote mistrust in those they are supposed to seek support from. This uncertainty is also seen in the precariousness of relying on externally funded third sector organisations as a source of instrumental support. For example, Brandon had of the sudden removal of support when a charity he was using suddenly stopped:

A charity, yes. That no longer exists. The funding was pulled earlier this year.

-Brandon, 54, Edinburgh, unemployed

The charity he referred to is one which he originally accessed to obtain a food parcel, and later volunteered for, that he had mentioned in relation to sources of support he had experienced. This charity had their funding stopped and, as a result, was forced to disband. This indicates how those downstream are all reliant on something further upstream in the system, in this case funding. Two sources of support, both food and social support, were removed from Brandon at short notice within a six-month period.

A further complexity in obtaining food support was the selectivity in available support. Scott described accessing one of his local food banks:

You can go to the Job Centre, they'll issue you one and they'll issue you three in total, but I'm told if you speak to them nicely, they'll issue you more.

-Scott, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Scott's account conveys a familiarity with both the formal and informal processes through which one specific food bank operates. Whilst his account of the informal route for access could be viewed positively, this could also be seen as problematic as it put staff in a position of significant power, introducing a certain level of conditionality into the interaction. "If you speak to them nicely" suggests that if staff like a person, or they behave in a way judged to be desirable, then they will be issued extra vouchers, providing additional access to support. However, if an individual does not meet their unspecified expectations, their ability to access food aid may be restricted.

Participants across the study described losing access to support or having difficulties in the process of accessing support. There were various reasons for this such as perceptions about their level of need and the precarious financial situation of some organisations. This precarity is further highlighted by the closure of one of the food aid locations involved in recruitment within a year of data being gathered due to funding ending and not being renewed. This can make it difficult for people to access support and build relationships, when the knowledge it can be removed at any time underpins these interactions.

Participants experienced difficulties in accessing support, often when it was objectively avoidable. They were particularly subject to the power dynamics between those providing support, and those in need of support. Economic processes drove funding decisions which resulted in the removal of support structures which reduced participants' abilities to have their basic needs met. Attitudes and behaviours of staff and volunteers, at times, limited access and made the process of accessing support more difficult. The economic processes of short-term funding introduced more precarity into the lives of participants, whilst the individuals at the face of organisations often contributed to the harms faced by participants, through their enactment of structural violence.

5.4 Coalescing harms of structural violence

Social processes, such as seeking and enduring insecure and low-paid work, accessing the social security system and the interaction with institutions surrounding these processes have been acknowledged as being structural determinants of food insecurity which impact at the individual level (APPG, 2014). These structural determinants lead to physical and emotional harm by preventing participants from meeting their basic needs. The structures and processes contributing to need-deprivation in participants are described in section 5.2.4 with additional sites of harm described in section 5.3. This section will explore the consequences of structural violence on participants in terms of the harms they experienced, which were frequently multiplicative in nature, looking at how socio-political and economic processes which prevent basic needs from being met are experienced at the individual level. The visceral nature of

the harms experienced by men was something they returned to regularly in their accounts, with discussions of eating, the home environment and health all prominent across narratives.

5.4.1 Eating whilst food insecure

Participants described how they felt about eating in the context of their food insecurity. All participants had experienced moderate to severe food insecurity within the past 12 months (as shown in the Table 3-1: Summary of phase one sample pg.89). Drawing on the framework of structural violence, this section explores the experiences of the men in relation to eating and hunger, with a focus on quantity of food, the insufficient quality of food and the effects of these as described by participants.

Being unable to access enough food to really satiate was an experience shared by most participants. Mark described focusing on the minimum number of calories he needed in a day:

For me, as long as I have 400 to 500 calories a day, I know I'm not going to die. And that sounds bleak, but that's my goal, is just to, no die, by starvation.

-Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

Mark described his focus on ensuring he eats enough daily energy intake to survive each day, and how he used this focus when eating foods he does not enjoy, particularly those obtained from food parcels. This indicates that his experience of eating was primarily focused on food as fuel, rather than as a source of comfort or enjoyment. His calorific aim was significantly below recommended amounts of 2500 calories per day (NHS, 2019), five times the amount which Mark aimed for. At our initial meeting Mark described how he felt as though his body was adapting to hunger as he noticed the effects of hunger less over time.

Insufficient food intake, and its effects, was also described by James who was,

at the time of the interview, eating one meal per day:

I'm losing weight. I've been told that I look like a junkie because of it, and I say, well I'm not, you know, I'm not eating right. People are telling me to eat more, and I say, well how can I, I can't afford it, you know. If I'm paid, my weight, the way I look, changes. I look the way I used to. But then, if I don't [get paid], if it goes down, I have to think of what type of food to buy, and if it's not high in protein, I start going down, you know. My skin looks dry, I look worried, I look like I'm angry when I'm not.
-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

Previously, we heard how being moved to UC had affected some participant's level of income, with James one of those affected. In the quotation above, he detailed how this reduction in income resulted in him being unable to afford to buy enough food to provide a sufficient diet in terms of quantity and quality. James was very aware of the quality of his diet, considering foods in terms of nutrients, and the effect that these had on his body. The lack of quantity and resultant weight loss was noticeable to others. James described the assumptions people made about his lifestyle and personality when he had lost weight. His use of the term "junkie", given its association with addiction (usually heroin), suggests the stigmatising experience of altered appearance due to inadequate diet. The gaunt appearance associated with James' weight loss left him looking more angular, contributing to more stigmatisation with him viewed more suspiciously, thus contributing to further marginalisation. James noted that he was showing visible signs of his food insecurity through not only weight loss but also dry skin, symptoms which were alleviated when he had income. In addition to the way it made him look, and how others perceived him, it also affected how he felt:

If you're eating basic foods, it doesn't give you, you know, the nutrients that you need, and you find that, you do get cold, you know, when you're not supposed to feel cold. And it's all because there's an imbalance, you know. So, I try to eat the foods that are healthy, but within my bounds I can live in.
-James, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

James described feeling cold as a consequence of eating foods which are low in nutrients. He further described the impact of a diet lacking protein and nutrient

dense foods: weight loss, drier skin, and feeling cold, but explained that his food choice was limited. James' description highlights the embodied impact of food insecurity and that whilst sufficient quantity of food, in order to thrive variety is required but unobtainable for those experiencing food insecurity. His account highlights adverse effects on his wellbeing needs - through nutrient intake - and his identify and meaning needs - through the impact on belonging associated with his appearance.

In addition to the insufficient nutrient quality of foods, the type of foods available to consume was also described by participants. Kevin described how he ate food obtained from the food bank:

I had nae money, nae electricity, and that went on for a few weeks. And I was using the foodbank. You can soak porridge and eat that cold. You're like gagging, just trying to swallow it, especially if you've no got sugar, or anything, to put in it, it's pretty horrible. But you get used tae it.
-Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

During the time Kevin was unable to cook any food, he was required to prepare foods in unconventional ways (discussed in more detail in section 6.2.3.1). This shows that the foods received from a food bank do not necessarily meet the requirements of all those receiving them. Giving an individual without the means to cook (no utilities) foods which require cooking does not address their needs. The result is ingenuity through desperation; however, the result is also unpalatable. The repetition of the words cold, and horrible, emphasised the degree of negativity associated with this eating experience. This was conveyed directly by Kevin when he described gagging when he attempted to eat porridge oats soaked in water. This suggests that the temperature and consistency of the cold porridge produced an involuntary effect on the body, rejecting the foods despite being desperate for something to eat. After describing how unpleasant eating these foods were, there was a matter-of-fact acceptance of this process, suggesting that with frequency individuals become accustomed to this, and focusing on the fact that it provides a relief to hunger. Similarly, the low quality of food that participants were sometimes subject to was summed up by Mark:

So, you kind of get the picture that, poor people are forced to eat food that's worse than dog food, you know. Just simply because we have no money, you know.

-Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

Mark conveyed the low quality of food both in terms of nutritional value and enjoyability to eat. This type of food is food that individuals who are food insecure are forced to eat, particularly when their food access is limited to food aid sources. These vivid accounts of everyday eating while food insecure, reflect a further dehumanising experience common across men's accounts - working against instincts to ensure survival. Men's accounts of eating whilst food insecure indicate how men experience harm through their wellbeing and identity needs being adversely affected.

5.4.2 Home environment: cold and hopeless

The home environment was a frequent topic of participants' narratives. Among the 18 men interviewed, 13 were currently renting their homes. Two participants were living in temporary accommodation⁴ and two participants owned their homes. When men renting or in temporary accommodation described their home environment, they frequently discussed the low temperatures.

Oh, yeah, I was cut off [gas was no longer provided to his home] since 2012, to 2016, until I had my daughter. So, then I had to reconnect to the gas main, basically. Otherwise, if I didn't have kids, I would have stayed off, you know. Minus ten was the worst temperature in my house. That was in 2010, when I first moved to [city name].

-Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

Mark described experiencing extreme cold in his home, particularly when he was cut off from utilities due to accrued debt. Even though reconnected to the utility supply for the benefit of his children, he went on to describe trying to limit his use to reduce costs: "I see myself sitting in the dark, at six o'clock at night, just so I'm not burning electricity" (Mark). The lack of utilities, and now

⁴ Temporary accommodation here means waiting to be permanently housed by the council, this covers a range of accommodation options such as B&Bs, hostels as well as studio flats.

the lack of income to spend on utilities, meant that Mark spent substantial quantities of time at home alone in the cold and dark, without access to basic amenities. Mark appeared to be very matter of fact in his account, with an extreme conservation of energy a regular coping strategy for him in the face of limited resources, including during winter, indicating his acceptance of the everyday normality of this experience. Whilst Mark was on a direct debit meter, Greg described how he coped through an extreme cold period whilst on a pre-payment meter:

And I remember lying in bed and I could see the...like, the frost...you know, see the frost coming out and my feet felt so SO freezing and so I went in...I went and took all my, like...all the towels...I took the towels, I took the...my jacket, 'cause I had a...my dad had given me a...like, a waterproof winter jacket when I went to the States. And I put that over my feet.

-Greg, 37, Aberdeen, unemployed

Greg's description of gathering whatever makeshift blankets he could get warmth from implies a sense of desperation and woeful lack of resources to relieve how cold he felt. Beyond the lack of fuel to heat, other sources of warmth require investment, such as purchasing blankets. Even the jacket he relied on was not something he was able to purchase himself. The frost from his breath provided visual confirmation of the otherwise invisible cold he was feeling. He went on to further describe his experience, and the anxiety it provoked regarding his vulnerability and wellbeing:

And I remember thinking, how...what happens, like, do you...what happens if...like, would I wake up if I started to freeze? Like, would I know...because I realise, like, minus 13, it's too cold. Like, everything would freeze. You know, and I thought, well if I'm bundled up, I'll see how I feel for an hour and if I feel warm, then I'll be fine and I'll sleep. And if I...if it starts to hurt cold, then I'll need to get up and not sleep, 'cause I was really, like...I didn't know what to do.

-Greg, 37, Aberdeen, unemployed

Further to the desperation conveyed by the bundling up in various layers, Greg also experienced concerns for his wellbeing through this exposure to relatively extreme temperatures. His account conveys a concern with survival - staying awake to ensure he did not become too cold. Structural violence is experienced in further denial of his wellbeing needs (necessary to avoid misery), with sleep a

perceived threat to survival rather than an opportunity for comfort and rest. Pain was the gauge used to determine if his home was too cold, with uncertainty around what to do to gain relief from the experience.

Kevin also reflected on the physical and emotional effects of being unable to access warmth:

Because the flat is freezing, and you're eating cold food, so it's really hard to get warm inside, eh, at the core. So, you just spend, well what I was doing was spending most of the day in a sleeping bag. ... And that kept me warm. But it's so cold, you just dinna want to crawl out of it. ... Yeah, I just think, it totally takes over, you just feel dead, you know. You've nae energy because you're cold, ill and weak. And just nae will to do the things that you would be doing, you know.

-Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

In addition to the extreme cold described by Greg and Mark, Kevin detailed the day-to-day reality of living in uncomfortable living conditions. From Kevin's account we can glean that lethargy, demotivation and at times a sense of disinterest in life stem from constantly feeling cold. The sleeping bag he had enveloped himself in provided some comfort, however, it left him unable to do anything but sit. He described how this left him without the energy or motivation to do the things he would like to do. The men detailed in their accounts the additional labour required to barely get by - keeping lights off in the evening, gathering clothing and towels and makeshift blankets, and sitting in a sleeping bag - all require effort, concentration, toleration of extreme discomfort, simply as part of everyday existence.

For many of the men being unable to afford warmth, sitting in a cold home, and being excluded from the activities a person would normally enjoy was commonplace. The consequences of their interactions with the systems of social security and the labour market, deprived them of their basic needs which impacted them physically and mentally. A social security system which left them destitute; unable to access reduced fuel payments via direct debit payments, for reasons such as debt, resulted in the men being forced to live in miserable conditions and unable to meet their welfare needs. The challenging physical sensations encountered, such as cold and darkness, within the home environment, can contribute to visceral emotions and concerns, leading to more

worries and a reduction in wellbeing, rather than a sense of safety. For many participants home was not an escape from being food insecure, but rather another site where the impact of structural violence was realised. Food insecurity is not the only outcome of structural violence, it comes packaged up with other conditions of poverty. Key to our understandings of men's lived experience of food insecurity is that it is not something experienced in isolation, to be mitigated through food provision, rather it occurs and coalesces with other conditions and settings.

5.4.3 Experiences of health and illness whilst food insecure

The consequences of food insecurity, as an outcome of structural violence, through food insecurity, were also seen in men's accounts of how their circumstances impacted their health and illness. Food insecurity, as described in Chapter Two, has previously been associated with poorer disease management. Participants' accounts revealed two main ways in which men's health experiences were affected by food insecurity: the food types and nutrition they were ingesting and through the effort involved in accessing food.

5.4.3.1 Long term conditions

Of the 18 participants involved in the study, over half disclosed living with at least one long-term condition. A range of long-term conditions were disclosed by participants: diabetes, pancreatitis, back pain, fibromyalgia, irritable bowel disease, osteo-arthritis, neuropathy, chronic fatigue syndrome, depression, ulcerative colitis, and heart disease. Participants described how their experiences of these conditions were affected, and how their concerns about illness management were affected, by food insecurity. One such way food insecurity affected long term condition management was through finding it challenging to meet dietary requirements. For John, this limited the support he was able to access, such as the community café he attended:

They are good in [Initiative name], but I say to them, you need to try and cater for diabetes as well, because you're offering cakes, you're offering biscuits, you're offering bread and all that's no good for a diabetic, I

said, because my limit is four slices of bread a day, that's it, and I have to count my carbs.

-John, 58, Glasgow area, medically retired

Whilst the community café John described provided food for low cost, he attended the community café more for the social aspect than the food, due, at least in part, to the foods provided not meeting his requirements for diabetes management. Instead, he described obtaining most of his food from “cheap” supermarkets such as Lidl and Aldi, due to his access to a car, or the local shop on days his multiple chronic illnesses made mobility challenging. He identified a potential dietary requirement barrier for individuals who are reliant on food aid. The carbohydrate content of the food provided may mean individuals who are food insecure are unable to utilise this resource, as it would be damaging to their health. John went on to describe how his eating habits were affected by a combination of his low income and the expensive local shop:

I just shop day-to-day in the shop and it's really expensive in there. I'm lucky if I cook a meal once a day and I'm a diabetic on insulin... with my diabetes, if I don't watch myself, I could slip...I could just fall asleep and not wake up and nobody will know, but that's my choice, you know what I mean, living on my own.

-John, 58, Glasgow area, medically retired

For those who are diabetic, it is important to manage blood sugar levels often through food intake and insulin treatment in order to prevent negative outcomes such as neuropathy, diabetic comas and even death. Therefore, people who have diabetes may struggle to maintain blood sugar within a normal range (Gucciardi *et al.*, 2014). This is reflected in John's attempted intervention at the community café, and in discussion of only having one meal a day whilst dependent on insulin. His disease management was compromised by the low income he received through social security payments, as one meal is inadequate to maintain the stable blood sugars he required. As he lived alone, he identified being at even greater risk if he did not monitor and manage his condition carefully.

Another participant who identified the potential for his low income to impact on his chronic condition was Fraser, who lived with heart disease:

I suppose it all just comes down to finance and health as well. I've had a heart attack or two in the past and sort of angina attacks, so when it comes to watching what I eat, when I eat, how much I eat I've got to be quite careful about it. Sometimes you just can't afford to always eat what you want and what you need to, you know, so it comes down to mostly finance really.

-Fraser, 45, Edinburgh, unemployed

Despite Fraser's relatively young age, he had already experienced significant cardiovascular events. Dietary advice following a heart attack suggests eating a diet high in fruit and vegetables, high in dietary fibre and low in ultra-processed foods (HRI, 2022). He referred to the inadequacy of his diet when talking about the following picture:



Fraser: *A place I shouldn't go, cheap and convenient is pretty much all I can say about it really.*

Kathryn: *Why shouldn't you go there?*

Fraser: *Because if my cardiologist saw me in there, he wouldn't be happy, I tell you that*

-Fraser, 45, Edinburgh, unemployed

Figure 5-6: Photograph of Greggs taken by Fraser

Both John and Fraser expressed concern around the management of their respective health conditions, making it clear that the most appropriate diet was cost prohibitive. The limitations placed on their diet compromised their intentions in relation to self-management.

Brandon, who disclosed having both long-term physical and mental health conditions described how he knew his diet was not great for his health:

Knowing that I didn't necessarily have a good diet or for that matter a basic diet, yes, I, kind of, put things in place to minimise ill health. My ME, my doctor thought it might have been a lack of vitamin D. He took

my blood, aye, and apparently it cost a fortune for this blood sample to get analysed, yes, and you're meant to have something with a reading over 40 or something like that, up to 125, I can't remember. Anyway, mine was at 18.

-**Brandon**, 54, Edinburgh, unemployed

Like Fraser and John, Brandon was aware that his diet was not ideal for his disease management. This was confirmed through blood tests indicating a nutrient deficiency. Vitamin D is available from oily fish, red meat, egg yolks and in fortified cereals and spreads, the blood test therefore corroborated Brandon's account that he was unable to obtain a basic diet. These participants both were in receipt of social security payments as their source of income, however this was inadequate for them to meet their dietary requirements. This interaction of the socio-political and the economic demonstrates how structural violence can affect individuals' experiences of health negatively, by contributing to food insecurity leading to poorer disease management. For these men, the social security system does not provide sufficient income for adequate disease management through diet. The very real consequence of this may be a shortened lifespan. Their very survival is threatened through systems which bar them from meeting their basic needs.

Another route to food insecurity affecting men's long-term health conditions discussed was how the labour intensive or inconvenient processes involved in accessing food might exacerbate ongoing issues. Difficulty accessing food is a feature of food insecurity, with insufficient income leading almost all participants to access food aid. Many participants accessed food aid, often using food banks which provided them with a food parcel:

"That's kind of a week's supply, your typical week's supply."

- **Kevin**, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed



Figure 5-7: Photograph of food parcel from food bank taken by Kevin

As exemplified by Kevin's image above, often foodbank parcels contain mainly tinned food. Carrying weighty tinned goods was problematic for some participants. For example, the food included in the image above is estimated to weigh over 5kg. The weight of packages, particularly when walking or reliant on public transport, as almost all participants were, was identified as problematic in the context of chronic conditions. Several participants who were living with chronic pain described the effect of carrying similar loads:

I've got a slipped disc, prolapsed disc, and a trapped nerve in my back. Aye, they're quite heavy, yeah. But just like everything, from the minute I wake up, 'till I go to sleep, I'm in pain, so it's just an added extra, kind of, to the pain I've already got, so.

-Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

Mark described how pain is a permanent feature of his life during waking hours, with carrying a foodbank parcel seen as “just” extra pain to cope with. This implies a degree of resignation to his circumstances, both living in chronic pain and that to access food he will experience further pain. The processes that prevented him from accessing more convenient sources of food, a combination of the inadequacy of the social security system to meet his needs, and the resulting accumulation of debt to achieve other welfare needs such as a warm home, lead to him experiencing additional pain.

For some participants, the issues of dietary requirements and accessibility of food coincided. Gary had additional dietary requirements due to a bowel condition and the weight of bags from food banks exacerbated joint pain. This resulted in him having to find workarounds for these issues, indicative of the heightened labour that those who are food insecure face. The weight of the parcels meant Gary, who estimated he obtained three quarters of his diet from a food bank, had what he termed a “food bank case”, to wheel the foods home.

A lot of people won't take tins because they are heavy, but the suitcase makes it easier. Tins have a longer shelf life but there's certain things I can't eat. The woman in the foodbank is really good will go and find skimmed milk for me and lets me do swaps for things I can eat
-Gary, 52, Edinburgh, unemployed

For Gary, a suitcase enables to him to access food, without exacerbating his chronic illness which included joint pain as well as a bowel condition which resulted in painful spasms if he ate the wrong foods. He highlighted how tinned foods can be problematic for some people due to their weight, however they work for him as he can stock up on the foods his body can tolerate - with support from a person in the foodbank who is understanding of his medical requirements. These workarounds make food aid possible for Gary, despite the potential for exacerbating his multiple health conditions, however this refers to the selectivity described in section 5.3 where Gary benefits from an ad-hoc decision to help him.

Whilst the weight of parcels from food banks was identified by some as problematic, particularly in the context of their health conditions, one participant commented on the weights of the bags:

That's a fair wee bit of lifting too, because there are women there like with prams and there's kids either side, you know. A Romanian woman and she's got different bags and bags of stuff to lift and I could quite happily, you know, just let me lift that, I'll do that
- Scott, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Whilst Scott recognised the weights of the bags as being difficult for some people, he only mentioned this in the context of women struggling to carry them

- particularly in addition to juggling other items. This perhaps is indicative that some accessibility issues may not be considered as problematic for men, in the context of hegemonic understandings of strength. However, only Scott made this point, and while it aligns broadly with hegemonic masculinities, the other men's accounts reflect the complex coalescence of harms that compromise such assumptions amongst men.

Long term illness was common in participants. Their accounts support the work outlined in Chapter Two, which considers food insecurity and long-term conditions to have a bidirectional relationships (Johnson *et al.*, 2021). Participants described how their health experiences were affected by food insecurity - through the food stuffs they had access to and through the ways in which they had to access food. For participants, accessing food whilst food insecure sometimes meant exacerbating chronic conditions (such as chronic pain), eating monotonously in order to avoid exacerbating conditions, or missing out on the food support available at community resources due to a lack of appropriate healthy options for their dietary needs. Accessibility related to weight of food parcels was predominantly raised by those with joint affecting illness. A consequence of exposure to structural violence for many of the men interviewed was that their ability to manage their long-term condition/s was compromised, with additional labour required to navigate being food insecure or an acceptance of an exacerbation of symptoms related to their condition.

Taken together, these accounts of how food insecurity intersects with and exacerbates ill health, provide further evidence of the coalescence of harms for those experiencing food insecurity. For those who are food insecure, everyday experience is not only hunger and accessing food aid, but often complex health management, making difficult compromises and choosing to prioritise particular needs at particular times, at the expense of others.

5.5 Discussion

Through the exploration of men's perceptions and experience of food insecurity this chapter has highlighted the dimensions by which food insecurity can be seen

as a symptom or outcome of structural violence. Throughout participants' narratives and embedded in their understandings are the means by which the current UK labour market and welfare system predicate their experience of food insecurity, and the suffering and labour that this necessitates. The participants in this study were asked to tell the story of their food insecurity, and in doing so detailed their perceptions of the factors which they felt had contributed, at times inevitably, to them becoming food insecure and or perpetuated their food insecurity. They also shared their experiences of accessing support. From these accounts emerged the everyday ways in which participants were affected by structural violence through multiple, often interacting, socio-political and economic processes. Their accounts provide a detailed picture of the intersections between food insecurity and other outcomes of structural violence related to poverty, including poor health and fuel poverty.

Analysis of men in Scotland's accounts of food insecurity, as an outcome of structural violence, lead to a number of key findings. The social security system and unjust labour practices were identified as where structural violence occurs, with the needs deprivation that results from these processes and structures causing harm. UC has been particularly detrimental to participants, with the waiting time associated with processing of applications a real contributor to needs-deprivation, particularly around men being able to meet their wellbeing needs. This in-built component of the process leads individuals into debt accrual, limiting the payments once they do begin to receive them, trapping them into hardship. Participants were frequently able to attribute responsibility for their food insecurity, with a real sense conveyed of the distal causes. The distal nature of these causes contributed to a sense of a lack of agency from participants to meaningfully change their circumstances. Engaging with organisations to mitigate some of the harms also resulted in more proximal interactions with perpetuations of structural violence. Previous research has also focused on the potential for these sites to enact structural violence (Whittle *et al.*, 2015; Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022). Bruck and Garthwaite (2020) identified that through bureaucratic and economic pressures, food aid sites can enact structural violence. Similarly in this study, food aid sites were found, at times, to be sites of harms, with unspoken rules particularly problematic. Hodgetts *et al* (2014)

described these negative interpersonal interactions at support sites as a the “reproduction of violent systematically patterned relations of power” (p.2049). Whilst their work looked at families and their interactions within the social security system in Auckland, New Zealand, there were similarities in the experiences described by the participants in this study. The scrutiny participants described in accessing support, such as referral for a food bank through the job centre exemplified the ways in which power relations continued to shape their experience beyond the systems which predicated their food insecurity. Through analysis the coalescing of the harms of structural violence were identified: food, their home environment, and their health. The ways in which men ate were impacted, negatively affecting the quantity and quality of food they ate but also excluding them from the social, shared experience of food. Their home environments were frequently hostile environments, through a lack of heat and electricity, this significantly impacted their ability avoid misery. Participants ability to manage their long-term conditions was reduced in the context of an inadequate diet and inhospitable home environments. Accounts of the exacerbation and compounding of these disadvantages provides insights into the complexity of lived experiences of poverty and highlights the multiplicative impacts of structural violence. Such consequences of social security policy and labour policy are not accidents, rather they are design features.

5.5.1 Evading observation

Structural violence has provided a lens through which to understand how day-to-day interactions were shaped by complex socio-economic forces and to understand the harms men experienced in the context of being unable to meet basic needs. Section 5.2.2 detailed the characteristics of structural violence that allow it to evade observation (Farmer, 2003). The first related to the fact that those who experience structural violence are often considered culturally remote. The participants in this study could be considered as culturally remote, as economically marginalised single men, a demographic whom have previously been described in health literature as “invisible” (Treadwell and Ro, 2003). Treadwell and Ro (2003) describe how in the US context poor men become invisible and their health needs neglected due to a lack of health insurance and

being less likely to seek needed health services, and less likely to receive adequate care when they do. This could be considered analogous to poor men in the UK, whose are invisible to policy makers, due to them having low power and a negative construction and thus being of low policy interest (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Michael Kimmel (1993) described invisibility as privilege, identifying the things which marginalise, or disempower you, are what make you visible and thus, being invisible equates to being unmarginalised. However, I would argue that this does not hold true for the participants in this study. Whilst their invisibility may result from the privilege, they hold due to being male, this invisibility serves to make it harder for them to access support and have their basic needs met. There is a need for intersectional perspectives that can consider the notion of gender privilege with greater, due to the intersections with class, ethnicity, and disability. For participants in this study, being invisible does not equate to being unmarginalised. Marginalisation has been considered interchangeable with social exclusion (Mowat, 2015) with social exclusion, arising from a lack of equal opportunities and barriers to participation in activities or benefits of the society in which they live (Razer, Friedman and Warshofsky, 2013, p. 1152). Participants described being marginalised in their narratives through accounts of social isolation and being unable to access support. The invisibility afforded to participants, in particular through their gender, served as a barrier to them being perceived as requiring support. Deterioration of economic conditions for participants, through austerity measures and changing labour market, has contributed further to their marginalisation.

The negative consequences of the “invisibility” of the men is evident in the accounts of barriers to help-seeking they detailed. In the health literature, (Galdas, Cheater and Marshall, 2005) there is substantial discussion around how masculinity interacts with help-seeking. The majority had of men had accessed support from organisations however pride was implicated as a barrier to accessing certain types of support - particularly by older men in the sample. Within the food insecurity literature it is noted than men are significantly more likely to access food banks than women (Loopstra and Lalor, 2017). Whilst this over-representation could indicate a willingness of single men to seek help, it may also indicate that single men either do not, or cannot, access support until

they are unable to meet the basic need of food. Rather than an indication of help-seeking, it may be an indication that the provision of help is not there, or their need is not recognised, when men were asking for support but being structurally denied provisions in this punitive system.

The second reason Farmer suggests structural violence is able to evade observation is the suffering it causes can be hard to quantify. In this study participants' suffering can be conceived of as hard to quantify because they articulated multiple, often overlapping, domains of suffering, the causes, and the impacts of which, can be hard to define. Whilst the harms can be hard to quantify, the root cause of them is easily quantifiable - a lack of money. Participants' narratives described the burden of debt - without hope of being able to reduce this, the cost of utilities, as well as the costs associated with not being able to afford utilities. The lack of money is easy to quantify, but the ways in which it wore participants down is hard to. For example, while participants could describe the experience of sitting in the dark and cold as resultant from financial insecurity, they were unable to quantify the range of impacts this had on their mental and physical wellbeing, or the impact of repeated failed efforts to access more affordable forms of utility. The energy and effort participants had to expend to receive modest, or no, improvement in their living circumstances was often seen in accessing the Social Security System - with various forms and appointments to keep track of, and in some cases health assessments to navigate and appeal. This repeated and constant effort for minimal reward contributes to an acceptance of inequality as inevitable, such that individuals become hardened to it as an everyday occurrence, aligning with previous conceptions of "the routine, ordinary and normative violence of everyday life" referred to as "terror as usual" (Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois, 2004, p. 5). The difficulty of quantifying also lies in the complexity in the causes and impacts of suffering, which are not neatly delineated. Participants may appear to have agency and choice, but often the level of agency they are able to enact is politically determined. In this way they experience harm through an inability to meet their freedom needs, with -for example- the choice of goods and services they use taken away from them. Additionally, it was clear that participants' choices in receiving and expressing an opinion were often

politically constrained: such as the conditionality and assessments associated with receiving social security support or requiring support to engage with local authorities or service providers.

Participants were often unable to enact financial savings, often from being weighed down by debt. This limited their ability to accessing financial savings such as an inability to move from a pre-payment utility meter to a direct debt meter. Descriptions of paying more to be poor were littered across participants' accounts, most frequently in reference to the cost of utilities on prepayment meters but also in terms of taking out high interest loans to pay off unexpected charges. A report by the Citizen's Advice Bureau (Hardy and Lane, 2018) indicates that being forced into debt to pay for essentials is common among those who are financially insecure, serving to further entrench people into poverty. The participants' accounts reflect the complexity of these interacting financial burdens, debt in combination with increasing living costs and lack of adequate income, and how they impact on their ability to meet their basic needs.

The final reason Farmer provides for structural violence evading observation is that it can be prohibitively difficult to describe the complexity of the interweaving of personal biographies with the larger tapestry of the socio-political. This study was underpinned by a narrative approach, which invited participants to describe their experiences of food insecurity, prioritising the aspects/issues they felt were important to share. Despite the diversity in the men's lives, the issues that were prioritised across all accounts were often similar - a failure of the social security system to allow them to meet their basic needs. The frequency with which issues with interacting with social security system were raised across men of different ages, in different areas of Scotland, is indicative of the wide net structural violence casts and provides a space to see some of the interaction of the personal with the socio-political context. It is not that these participants were specifically asked about their interactions with Social Security System, to describe how support structures failed them, but rather that universally they described their interactions with systems as core to their story of food insecurity. The findings from this chapter indicate that participants are exposed to structural violence, the result of this is the

coalescing of harms. The implications of this chapter relate to the need for policies which address the structural processes which forced participants to live with a standard of living below that which is considered socially acceptable. For all participants, insufficient funds underpinned their food insecurity and the other unacceptable living standards they experienced. This implies that the social security system requires changes to become easier to navigate, confirming the importance of removing the five week wait as highlighted by others (Drake, 2017; HC/HL Deb, 2019; Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019) - to prevent the cycle of debt many participants found themselves in.

5.5.2 Inevitability: a lack of agency

A lack of agency stemming from feelings of inevitability was a common feature across participants' narratives, with many describing the everyday ways they experienced powerlessness. Powerlessness has been linked to food insecurity previously, with Douglas (2015 *et al*; 2020) describing the powerlessness felt by those using a food bank in the North East of Scotland. Powerlessness for participants was experienced across many areas of their lives. In addition to the poverty premium and lack of food choice described above, participants often alluded to powerlessness in interactions around accessing support. Being reliant on support services moved participants into a position of reduced power, they felt their ability to complain was constrained, and that they had to behave in ways the system deemed acceptable, or their support would be withdrawn. The type of power being exerted here has been theorised by Power and Small (2021) as "pastoral power". According to the authors pastoral power relates to limitations on the number of packages individuals can receive, ambiguous criteria to meet a referral (thus forcing disclosure) as well as being dependent on a referral in the first place. Experiencing this type of powerlessness had made some participants apathetic, whilst others were angry. Their powerlessness resulted from the expectancy or experience of being unable to control their circumstances due to control being located in sources external to them, be it in the social security system, in the poverty premium or in the gatekeeper of services. These imbalances of power, and the associated low status in the social systems they navigated, has a well-recognised detrimental impact on health and

well-being across a person's life trajectory (Farmer, 2003; Wilkinson and Pickett, 2019).

This powerlessness was also experienced where individuals' circumstances were often not considered, particularly when dealing with authorities. Diagnosed health conditions were not considered an acceptable reason to avoid sanctions and participants described how authorities downplayed their health status in assessments. Several participants had experienced relationship breakdown or bereavement which contributed to their situation. The relationship breakdown, and a lack of support following it, often resulted in a loss of income, through pathways such as social security payments changing. Experiences of domestic violence were described by several participants, with accessing support around this experience impacted by their gender. This impact related to both felt and enacted stigma. Avoidance of accessing support related to domestic violence occurred due to concerns around how they would be perceived, and when accessing support the response was one of disbelief rather than support.

The harms experienced by participants was readily described by them, as the data in this chapter has shown. This suffering was experienced not only in a physical way, such as through hunger and experiences of bitter cold, but also through impacts to psychological, social, and spiritual wellbeing, presenting as feelings of distress or hopelessness. Structural violence textured participants' lives, with the structural violence of the social security system playing a key role in the financial, and resultant food, insecurity, of many participants. A significant portion of this was attributed to UC by participants. The UC application system is a prime example of the bureaucracy that participants are forced to navigate across different areas of their life. Beyond applying for welfare support, participants also described the bureaucracy in accessing some other types of support. The stress of navigating unclear systems, struggling to identify and access support, and the conditionality associated with different types of support, all contribute to the significant difficulties participants are experiencing. These trickle down from policy decisions which leave them with insecure access to food and experiencing feelings of powerless and hopeless from the inevitability and ongoing precarity of their situation.

5.6 Summary

In this chapter I explored the ways in which structural violence affected participants in my study. Initially, the chapter provided an overview of structural violence, including a definition and examples of where it has been used previously, to provide context for the rest of the chapter. The chapter then described the pathways through which participants were exposed to structural violence through the social security system and the labour market. The various types of suffering experienced by participants have been related to needs deprivation framework from Galtung. Through asking participants to tell the story of their food insecurity, they shared various structural determinants which resulted in harm, most frequently related to the social security system. The men in this sample frequently perceived their food insecurity to be, either partially or fully, explained by social determinants that they had limited agency to challenge, leaving them experiencing differing degrees of powerlessness which sometimes resulted in apathy, or hopelessness. Current approaches to supporting those experiencing food insecurity often operate at the individual level, and there is a need to address the structural causes of financial insecurity that leads to individuals being unable to afford food (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012). To address structural violence, we must identify it where we can in order to create processes which do not inherently cause harm to those within them.

It has been argued that the insights that can be gained from utilising structural violence as framework for real-life experiences in vulnerable populations can lead to better, more effective social policy (Farmer *et al.*, 2006). The role of lived experience data in social policy will be explored in Chapter Seven, where the experience of the men and their portrayals of the systemic drivers (structural violence) and coalescing of harms resultant from them will be shared with stakeholder to explore how these visceral accounts could influence decision-making. As described in Chapter Three, this thesis uses frameworks of structural violence and biographical disruption, having applied a lens of structural violence in this chapter, Chapter Six will use biographical disruption.

6 Biographical disruption in the lives of food insecure men

6.1 Overview of chapter

Alongside exploration of the structural causes (as explored in Chapter Five), it is important to consider the impacts of food insecurity on individuals affected, particularly those whose experiences may be “residing in [...] shadows” (Timmermans, 2013, p. 3). Through abductive analysis, biographical disruption was identified as a means to carefully consider men’s experiences of food insecurity. Biographical disruption allows for an understanding of the visceral nature of the accounts whilst exploring commonalities in the basic structure of the experience of food insecurity. It allows for the exploration of the embodied experience of food insecurity and to understand the extent to which food insecurity is experienced as a disruptive event. Firstly, this chapter outlines the concept of biographical disruption before considering the ways in which food insecure men in Scotland experience it. The chapter contributes to the aim of this thesis, exploring the range and diversity of men’s experiences of food insecurity in Scotland and contributes to answering:

1. What are single men’s experiences of food insecurity in Scotland?
 - i) How do single men in Scotland mitigate/cope with food insecurity?
 - ii) How do men describe the impact of being food insecure, and the associated coping mechanisms, on their everyday life?

6.2 Food insecurity as biographical disruption

6.2.1 Biographical disruption recap

Biographical disruption is a concept which, as described earlier in this thesis, has its roots in understanding the experiences of individuals with a chronic illness. It theorises chronic illness as an experience which shifts an individual from their expected life trajectory on to an unexpected one. Bury (1982) suggests three aspects of biographical disruption which may arise in an individual's experience of chronic illness:

- 1) The disruption of the taken for granted assumptions and behaviours that structures an individual's daily life (1982, p. 169)
- 2) The disruption of explanatory systems normally used by people such that a fundamental re-thinking of the person's biography and self-concept is involved (1982, p. 169)
- 3) The way in which individuals respond, a process which involves the mobilisation of resources in facing an altered situation. (1982, p. 170)

Further to the three aspects of biographical disruption described above, Bury (1982) contends that the meaning of an illness can be seen as operating on two levels: 1) in terms of the problems, social costs, and consequences of the condition; and 2) in terms of the symbolic significances or connotations that particular conditions carry. Chronic illness interrupts biography and social relations, with the lived experience of these disruptions shaped by the intersecting identities of individuals (Crenshaw, 1991). That is to say that the intersection of race, class, gender and sexuality will shape experiences of, and meanings of, chronic illness for the individual (Campbell, 2021). Bury identified a variety of responses following the development of a chronic condition relating to three broad areas: what individuals come to think as they learn how to tolerate the effects of a condition (feelings of worth, normalisation of the condition and the limiting scope it presents); what people do to manage the impact of the condition such as partitioning off aspects of life that are no longer viable; and, how people present their changed self, both in terms of physical

appearance and social circumstances which can range from outright denial to fully embracing the condition.

Bury's sociological work on biographical disruption has been interested in how the meanings of our everyday interactions and our identity are changed with the onset of chronic illness. This includes considering how these interactions and conceptualisation of self-shift as specific aspects of the condition make themselves more known over time. For example, Bury found/hypothesised individuals with a sudden onset of illness and introduction of symptoms experienced higher levels of biographical disruption than for those who had a gradual onset of illness and were able to integrate small changes into their day to day.

6.2.2 Biographical disruption: a new application

Biographical disruption considers chronic illness as a rupture in the fabric of everyday life and this conceptualisation has allowed for its application outside of chronic illness, having been used to look at emotional distress and loneliness previously (Bradley, 2006). The application of the biographical disruption framework beyond experiences of chronic illness, suggests the potential extension of its usefulness in understanding other health-related issues as disruptive life events. By considering how others have drawn on biographical disruption beyond chronic illness, the potential for the framework to support understandings of the lived experience of food insecurity will be discussed below.

It has been argued that biographical disruption is a key concept in gaining insight into the lived experience of emotional distress. Bradley (2006) used narratively obtained accounts of emotional distress and framed them as biographical disruption, as continuity of narrative brings stability whilst disruption can lead to anxiety. Prior to this work, biographical disruption literature had predominantly been focused physical conditions, with Bradley's work shifting focus to the emotional rather than the physical.

Adding to the utility of biographical disruption outside of chronic illness is work which has been undertaken theorising loneliness in older adults as biographical disruption. In this, Morgan and Burholt considered loneliness as being triggered by disruptive events (Morgan and Burholt, 2020). Conceptualising events which trigger loneliness as disruptive events provides a further basis for understanding the events which cause food insecurity as disruptive as the framework can be applied to social phenomenon, in addition to the applications to the physical.

Bury suggests the centrality of instability and uncertainty in chronic illness, which I argue resonates with the experience of food insecurity given the potential for individuals experiencing food insecurity to experience instability due to precarity of poverty and related uncertainty (Korte and Regard, 2014). Biographical disruption characterises chronic illness as a social experience and as this research aims to understand the social experience of food insecurity, I suggest that this framework can be usefully applied in the context of the experience of food insecurity, and I will apply the dimensions described by Bury to the data generated in phase one of the study.

6.2.3 Disruption of taken for granted assumptions and behaviours

This section explores the ways through which food insecurity, and the circumstances contributing to it, cause the disruption of the taken for granted assumptions and behaviours that structure an individual's daily life, as described by Bury. A taken for granted assumption by many, is the ability to meet the basic need of food and drink - a foundation in Maslow's hierarchy of needs (Maslow, 1943), and one of the wellbeing needs identified in Chapter Five. When the supply of these basic requirements is disrupted, there are consequences for our ability to reach and meet other needs and norms, such as shelter and a feeling of belonging.

Social norms are implicit customs that provide a guide for the ways in which we behave throughout our lives, these norms are influenced by aspects of our identity such as our gender, race, and class. These social norms powerfully influence feelings, assumptions and behaviours that structure an individual's

daily life. This influence comes from the social judgement associated with operating outside of these norms. Social norms have been found to influence food choice and levels of food intake (Higgs and Thomas, 2016), as well as other norms related to accessing and affording food such as food shopping and performing domestic tasks such as cooking a meal (Costa, 2013).

By exploring disruption to food preparation, access and choices, and explanatory systems related to food, the following sections discuss how food insecurity can cause the disruption of assumptions and behaviours that are central to daily life.

6.2.3.1 Disrupted Food Preparation

Accounts of disrupted food preparation were commonplace in descriptions of men's everyday experiences of food insecurity. Men described how food insecurity limited participation in the everyday task of preparing food. One aspect of this was being reliant on insecure resources that are often taken for granted, such as having the utilities required to cook and consuming hot food. Kevin provided an example of this:

Kevin: So I discovered you can soak pasta, a couple of hours and eat it, and it's like it was cooked, but it's cold, right, but it works, things like that.

[Kathryn]: How did you find that out?

Kevin: Just desperate for something to eat, so I just left it soaking in cold water, and then it just went soft, you know, so cold pasta, it fills your stomach, aye.

- Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

Kevin's description of circumventing standard cooking practices due to a lack of resource is a key example of the additional effort required to meet fundamental needs. It demonstrates the subversion of taken for granted assumptions in food preparation and mealtimes in the structuring of daily life.

The disruption of taken for granted assumptions in his daily life was further described by Kevin through being unable to participate in the cultural norm of

making a cup of tea. He had photographed a mug containing tea and explained this decision:

Well, I took that because, when you do have no money, it's one of the most British things, isn't it, a cup o' tea. But if you've got no money, you're not even getting a cup of tea, you're not even allowed a cup of tea, you know. You can drink cold coffee because it dissolves. But you cannae even just, a simple cup of tea, you know, it just, sort of, sums it up, like.

- Kevin, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed



Figure 6-1: Photograph of a cup of tea taken by Kevin

In Kevin's explanation of his photograph, he described the symbolic significance of drinking tea as a deeply entrenched social norm of daily life in the UK, an innately British thing to do (Douglas, 1987). As well as being an important part of the collective cultural landscape, tea can also be seen to hold socially shared meanings. For example, making a cup of tea can be seen as a way to relax, to settle in somewhere new, to welcome someone or to refresh and rejuvenate (Hannam, 1997). Kevin further demonstrated subverting standard practices through reporting that he dissolved coffee in cold water, instead of having a warm drink. A warm drink can be seen as symbolising comfort and care, with a warm cup of tea or coffee often offered to welcome someone into homes, or to

provide some comfort in an upsetting situation. Access to warmth is something many people in the UK take for granted. Having to drink cold coffee and being unable to access a warm cup of tea invokes feelings of desolation and provides further illustration of how a lack of resource causes disruption to taken for granted assumptions. There is symbolic significance in his inability to participate in a cultural norm, reflecting his perceptions of being unable to participate fully in everyday life.

Food preparation was also found to be disrupted through the facilities available to participants. Struan recalled disrupted food preparation whilst experiencing homelessness and being temporarily housed in a bed and breakfast (B&B):

This is when I was in the B&B. I bought a slow cooker which you're not allowed to have. But I actually cooked this curry myself in the B&B until They searched my room and confiscated it. Against all the rules, health, and safety and whatever.

- Struan, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed



Figure 6-2: Photograph of meal prepared in slow cooker taken by Struan

Struan had to break the rules of the B&B in order to be able to cook himself a meal. He did not have access to a normal kitchen, and the appliances associated with it, thus limiting what he was able to prepare. For a brief period, the slow cooker enabled him to prepare hearty and nutritious foods which could be cooked in this way, such as the curry shown above. When this was removed, his

ability to prepare food was severely limited. He described the cooking facilities at the B&B:

Certainly, the B&B I was at you could use the microwave at night between 6:00 and 8:00 and if I remember rightly there were 28 tenants, so if they all wanted food, you'd no chance.
 - **Struan**, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed

The inadequacy of the preparation options available are evident in the quotation above. The main function of a microwave is to reheat food which has already been cooked. Often this consists of nutrient-poor and often expensive ready-meals, rather than food made from nutrient-dense, basic ingredients. The high number of tenants in the B&B expected to use this one cooking aid, and the short window of opportunity to use it, gave each tenant just over 4 minutes per evening to prepare a meal. The circumstances contributing to Struan's food insecurity left him in a position where he was unable to participate in social norms of evening meal preparation. Demonstrating how these circumstances were a change in his usual food preparation behaviour Struan went on to say:

Because I was in a B&B for so long and homeless off and on, I'm actually quite proud of having a kitchen and the ability to cook again.
 - **Struan**, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed

Having the right to access cooking appliances disrupted and being unable to make hot meals and hot drinks, is indicative of how food insecurity disrupts taken for granted behaviours. For Struan, this occurred due to the limits placed on his behaviour through rules created by others, and through a lack of resources. The relationship between housing insecurity, poverty and food insecurity created a vicious cycle, where efforts to improve his food insecurity situation put his housing at risk.

Food of course has a role beyond its status as a basic need; participation in food and eating can be a source of celebration and its enjoyment is a social norm for many (Fieldhouse, 1995). However, this taken for granted assumption of food being more than just meeting a basic need can be disrupted in the experience of food insecurity. Several men reflected on how food preparation, and food in general, no longer held positive connotations. For example, Mark described how

preparing food had become about survival, something to be endured rather than enjoyed:

That's two meals, right there, and a decent sized plateful. And it's a slow burning energy, which means, even if I only ate one for 24 hours, I've had enough calories, that I'm no going to die.

- Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed



Figure 6-3: Photograph of 'food as survival' meal taken by Mark

Here Mark described using his skills gained as chef, before he became chronically ill, to sustain himself by making use of a packet of Scotch Broth mix to turn into a kind of risotto from homemade chicken stock. He described how previously he identified as somebody who loved food and was passionate about flavours, creating food that people would enjoy but now positioned it only as a source of fuel.

So far, I have outlined how taken for granted assumptions relating to the cooking and consuming of food and drink were disrupted by food insecurity, with participants having to soak food that would normally be cooked and being unable to participate in the consumption of hot drinks. However, the disruption of taken for granted assumptions also appeared in how individuals access food and their food choices, as described in the following section.

6.2.3.2 Food access and food choices

This section will look at how taken for granted assumptions about accessing food and food choices are disrupted by food insecurity. Several participants discussed different methods of accessing food challenged social norms. Brandon described the lengths he went to in order to obtain funds to buy food:

There's a scheme with one of the large supermarkets whereby you deposit plastic bottles for recycling. You get ten pence per bottle, and I go, and I beg, borrow, and steal plastic bottles from various sources, stick them in a bag, and then when I have to go and get something, I'll go and get something.

- **Brandon**, 54, Edinburgh, unemployed

For most people, the taken for granted assumption is that when you need food you will go to the shop, pick up the items you need, pay and leave. Brandon described the disruption of this norm through the additional work required: the collection of bottles from various sources to generate enough funds in 10 pence increments to buy just enough to get by. Different consumers have different shopping patterns, for example doing big weekly shops, or small top-up-as-you-go shops. However, the need to collect bottles in order to access a sandwich to eat for the day is inconsistent with social norms through the way funds are generated, and the quantity of food purchased and consumed in an average day. However, this method of obtaining food vouchers appeared to enable Brandon to have more choice over his diet than would be available through other methods such as food banks. Using this approach, he was able to first decide what he wanted or needed, and then worked until he was able to generate enough vouchers to get this. Nevertheless, this small element of choice comes at considerable effort.

The impact of the disruption in food choice was difficult for many participants. Mark described the loss of food choice that comes from relying on food parcels and how this made him feel:



Figure 6-4: Photograph of Fray Bentos pie taken by Mark

Yeah, and a Fray Bentos chicken pie. Probably the worst food in the world. The chicken doesn't look like chicken. The pastry is more like jelly. That came in a food parcel, about a year ago. I was down to my last, I didn't want to go into my survival rations that I've got, so I'm using up the last of my cupboard...depravity is what it represents to me.
 - Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

Mark described how he received a chicken pie as part of a food parcel but avoided using it for as long as possible, as it was not something he would choose to eat of his own volition. This loss of agency over what food is consumed resulted in the loss of eating as a gratifying experience and one which he related to being solely about survival. This emotive language connoted an emergency situation, where choice is no longer an option, and the only priority is staying alive. The lack of food choice was a frequent issue for participants and for some, the majority of their diet was food they had not chosen for themselves resulting in often yet another instance of a loss of control in their lives.

As outlined in Chapter Two, there has been an increase in both public awareness of food banks and use of food banks, however, accessing food from a foodbank continues to operate outside the primary food system and often represents a loss of food choice, as Mark identified. Other men also reflected on how their

everyday practices related to eating were limited by the food available from food aid providers. Scott, who was referred by a non-food bank food aid organisation, identified enduring certain limitations to his dietary choices:

They don't do like the likes of milk. They hand you out, I'm not complaining, don't get me wrong, they hand out loads of cereal, you can get cereal and stuff like that there too, but you can't get milk. You know, and if you can't afford to buy your own bread or your own box, a pound's worth of cereal, there's not much chance of you having milk.
- Scott, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

In this way, dietary choices are further disrupted for individuals who are food insecure by being unable to access common food combinations. Diet quality and enjoyment are both compromised by this lack of food choice. Dietary quality is reduced in this example through lower protein, calcium, and other nutrients a person would access through milk. The inadequacy of charitable food provision is highlighted by Scott's observation regarding the lack of milk, the more expensive and usual addition to cereal, which requires chilled storage and has a shorter shelf-life. Scott and Mark's reflections resonate across men's accounts, with food banks helping individuals to meet their calorific requirements but often providing food that may not be particularly desirable to eat.

Despite the reduction in dietary quality, it also appeared that Scott was reluctant to criticise the provision as indicated by his offering of the qualification "I'm not complaining". This desire, or need, to be seen as grateful for support has been identified in other work which has specifically explored experiences of those receiving food aid from food banks (van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014). This account illuminates how participants' narratives are based around various tensions, in particular managing their identity as recipients of inadequate support, alongside recognising the unfairness of the situation they find themselves in.

The foods we eat are acknowledged as representing more about us than just the requirement for fuel; being required to eat foods they do not like, eating repetitive and bland meals due to a lack of food choice is a manifestation of being unable to fully partake in the cultural norm of food as something to be enjoyed and shared (Fox, 2014). The accounts of the men reflect their

experiences of diminished autonomy, where consumption of food is not a matter of choice, but necessity:

I'd say three quarters of my diet comes from food banks... food is so expensive now, especially fresh food. Sainsbury's is mega expensive and it's the nearest shop... I eat beans almost every day
 - Gary, 52, Edinburgh, unemployed

The food bank Gary attended would let him swap some items out, due in part to his bowel condition and in part due to his regular attendance and familiarity with those who worked and volunteered there. By putting in additional labour to building relationships and make the best of a difficult situation Gary was able to marginally improve his food access. This could be interpreted as an attempt to exert some control within the system, however, the level of control he had over what foods he chose to eat was still extremely limited and resulted in repetitive food consumption, with the same items eaten most days. The repetitive nature of food in the experience of food insecurity resonated across accounts, summed up by Tim:

You're eating the same food which you find a bit boring
 - Tim, 63, Glasgow, part time employed

Whilst most participants discussed food choice in the context of food aid, some participants provided photographs of the types of things they would like to purchase but currently cannot. Gary, Cameron, and Tim took photographs of things they would like to be able to purchase but currently cannot. Cameron explained how he thought the beetroot burgers looked good, and he was interested in trying them, but £2.30 was too much to spend on something that might only last one meal. Whilst Gary explained he had been shopping with his daughter and she had wanted to try the gammon joint, but it was significantly too expensive for him. Whilst Tim shared the image of a latte, describing how he knew they were everyday options for other people, but for him they were now an 'extreme treat'- only available when somebody offered to purchase it.



Figure 6-7: Photograph of the type of food he'd like to buy taken by Fraser



Figure 6-5: Photograph of food he'd like to try taken by Cameron



Figure 6-6: Photograph of a 'treat' taken by Tim

This section has considered the ways in which food insecurity disrupts the norms, both at a societal and individual level, associated with accessing and affording food for single men experiencing food insecurity in Scotland. Through the lens of biographical disruption food insecurity upsets the taken for granted assumptions and social norms around standard cooking practices, food procurement, food quality and food choices. Common sense assumptions such as having the means to cook pasta or being able to choose what you want to eat from the shop, can

no longer be taken for granted and this is a core component of biographical disruption.

6.2.4 Disruptions in explanatory systems

The second aspect of experiencing biographical disruption identified by Bury (1982) is “disruptions in explanatory systems normally used by people such that a fundamental rethinking of the person’s biography and self-concepts is involved”. This means that through experiencing a condition an individual finds themselves having to reformulate their life biography and their sense of self in order to accept both the loss of the ideas they held and their new situation moving forward.

To understand the reformulation of a person’s biography or life narrative it is important to acknowledge the process through which explanatory frameworks are developed and meanings are attributed to experiences. Through the lens of biographical disruption meanings are not simply personal but result from the shared experiences and interactions with others, and the disruption of explanatory systems can come both from how one views themselves and how others view them. This is important as how others perceive a person and how one perceives themselves affects how they move through the world and the decisions that they make. In the case of physical illnesses, this can be seen through symptoms of an illness leading to difficulties or inability to carry out the social roles expected. This creates the threat to self, and thereby causes biographical disruption.

This idea of being unable to carry out the socially expected roles (either by themselves or others) was something several participants reflected on. Some participants presented a clear questioning of their identity, whilst some showed a partial shift. Others showed food insecurity was a threat to their identity by actively resisting compromising their sense of self in their account (biographical re-enforcement). Some participants experienced biographical flow, with the experience of food insecurity considered an almost natural consequence in their lives, or of their current circumstances.

6.2.4.1 Loss of Identity

For some participants, the move into food insecurity was experienced as radically altering their life course, leaving them searching for understanding in their changed circumstances. Ashtak described how his sense of self was affected by requiring support:

You have a feeling, for example, that I am a burden to the society, you have a feeling. And you are somehow let's say in the first days it's somehow affects your self-confidence or your self-esteem for example. You have a sense, for example that why I am in this situation, for example, when you are new to the situation... but the reality is this one, that definitely you have a think... a, kind of, sense for example because if you are from a background... from a rich background, having a home for example, having enough money for yourself, and so now being in this situation, so the amount of your self-conception regarding yourself is affected for example.

And to tell you the truth actually, even just in the first days actually being in the line actually, to the queue to seek support actually, it was definitely very hard. Emotionally it was very hard for example, because you never let's say went to a situation like this.
- Ashtak, 28, Glasgow, student

A radical shift in circumstance, becoming food insecure, led to Ashtak questioning how he thought of himself, typifying the way in which a disruption in one's life narrative can cause a shift in sense of self. Sense of self can relate to feeling a sense of certainty about one's place in society, family or other interactional environment. Ashtak came from a well-paid job in another country to study in Scotland, and whilst in Scotland his position changed, causing him to become food insecure. Initially, Ashtak was in a space where he could routinely access and afford food, for example going to shops to purchase what he required. However, when his circumstances changed, so did the routine. This altered his certainty as his normal routine of being able to access food disappeared, creating discomfort. As someone who had never had to rely on food support before he found the experience to be damaging to his concept of self, questioning "what is going on here?" This relates to a stage Bury identifies when bodily states not usually brought into consciousness require decisions around help seeking. For Ashtak, the help seeking was damaging to his sense of self as

his certainty of his place in society had been altered. This hit him as he queued to access food, with the need to seek help an emotionally demanding process for him, indicating the process of accessing help had symbolic significance for him.

The loss of paid employment, the inability to participate in paid employment or reliance on social security contributed to many participants' food insecurity. For some participants this signified a shift in their biographies as life took on a new trajectory, with the loss of paid employment requiring them to access social security. Those who had been in longer term employment previously often found seeking help challenging such as Gary who acknowledged “[I] *should have given in sooner and got help with benefits and that, but nobody wants to do that do they*”. For many participants accessing support was difficult to navigate, an experience which was explored in the previous chapter, however for some, the experience of being food insecure and associated negative experiences had been overwhelming:



Figure 6-8: Photograph of a scalpel taken by Kevin

Describing his choice of a particularly emotive image during his interview, Kevin said:

I wasn't sure whether to put that in, but I thought, well it's the truth, eh. I sat with that thing at my wrist, two or three times, just because I

was so depressed.... I wasn't sure if I should put that in because it seems a bit melodramatic. But it's the truth, you know... I was just so low, aye. Just being cold and hungry all the time. And just, it gets old really quick.
 - **Kevin**, 56, Edinburgh, unemployed

For this participant, the situation resulting from having to rely on social security support, the embodied experience of being unable to heat his flat and experiencing hunger, created distress which had at some points felt entirely unliveable. The distress caused by the embodied experience of having a low income had a significant impact on his life trajectory with him experiencing suicidal ideation and emotional distress. Another participant described how the worry and frustration of his situation had contributed to thoughts of suicide:

You're always worried when you're going to next eat. You're worried about how you look, your appearance. You get frustrated a lot, because you're trying to do something, and it's like, they don't care, you know. It's not impacting on them, so they don't care, you know. And it does tempt you to have thoughts, of committing suicide.
 - **James**, 50, Aberdeen, unemployed

The act of taking one's own life has previously been described as the ultimate disruption of a person's biography (Bradley, 2006); an escalation of a person's desire to avoid their current circumstances and the perceived implications these circumstances may have about self. Suicide as escape from self is proposed by Baumeister (1990) as the culmination of six steps: current outcomes or circumstances falling far below standards either due to high standards, recent setbacks or both; internal attributions so negative outcomes create negative implications about self; a state of high-awareness due to comparing self to outside standards; this state creating negative comparisons of self; an attempt to escape this unhappy state by trying to avoid meaningful thought; finally an increasing disinhibition resulting from increasing desire to end aversive feelings, thoughts and experience creating an increased willingness to attempt suicide. For Kevin, the scalpel pictured had originally been used in making art, a source of enjoyment for him, but had become a tool with the potential to end the significant emotional distress associated with his experience of food insecurity. This demonstrates the significant impact food insecurity can have on a person,

through contributing to the unbearable experience of poverty, leading to the consideration of suicide.

Loss of identity was felt by some participants in terms of how their perception of self within society had altered. Accepting that they required help, and the actual labour of help-seeking, was emotionally demanding. This was particularly dominant in the narratives of those who had experienced longer term paid employment prior to becoming food insecure. Whilst only two participants disclosed suicidal ideation, the potential ultimate disruption, food insecurity has been associated with suicide attempts (Koyanagi *et al.*, 2019). As I did not explicitly ask about suicide it is possible that other participants did experience suicidal feelings but did not disclose them. Whilst some participants described a loss of identity, some described what could be considered as more of a “partial disruption”, this will be explored in the following section.

6.2.4.2 Partial Disruption

Partial disruption relates to idea that a disruption in sense of self does not always result in a total loss of identity. This was the case for one participant, Mark. For him, being a good father was an important part of his identity. At our first meeting he explained how he had found out about the study through the Father’s Group he attended at a local community centre. In the excerpt below, he had not seen his daughter for several weeks due to her being taken abroad by her mother.



Figure 6-9: Photograph of food for his children taken by Mark

It was good to have her [my daughter] back. So I had tae do something, so I spent the last of my money on getting her something decent to eat, because she'd been away for three weeks. She missed us, so I need to give her some comfort food. It's expensive, but worth the smile, you know, worth that... By the time I got the chicken and the potatoes, and obviously, her sweeties, I was left with, like, £5, £6. So, the rest of my pictures are all coinciding with how little money I hid after daein that.
 - Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

The picture and text above show that Mark prioritised his children and their nourishment. In saying “worth the smile”, he identified the emotional work of food provision, concomitant with his framing of his role as a parent. Reinforcing his identity as a good father, he preferred to eat food he did not enjoy ensuring he could provide his children with food they enjoyed. He did not want them to experience food as merely fuel - again identifying the emotional work of food. Being able to shield his children from the conditions of poverty was important to his identity as a parent:

Because I don't want to be that dad where they come and say, can I have this, and I need to say, no.
 - Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

The provision of food represented the opportunity to strengthen his identity as a good father, with food being associated with care to him. However, it also highlighted how food insecurity and the disruptive events around it was a threat to that identity, due to the level of sacrifice required in order to maintain it. This example demonstrates how biographical disruption can both disrupt and reinforce identities, seemingly simultaneously. However, as described above by other participants the experience of food insecurity was conveyed as being significantly disruptive to their sense of self, leading to individuals feeling unable to carry out the social roles expected of them. In this way biographical disruption can be seen as rupturing the life narratives that people use to understand themselves. By not being able take on the social role they expected or by having to make sacrifices in order to maintain their narrative and create

biographical reinforcement, they experienced disruption in their day-to-day life. This will be discussed later in this chapter.

6.2.4.3 Re-enforcing Identity

Rather than loss, or partial disruption of identity, some participants experienced a re-enforcing of identity. This is where components of a person's identity present before a condition or experience gain increased importance as a result of the condition or experience. (Carricaburu and Pierret, 1995). Rather than their identity being lost (section 6.2.4.1) instead aspects of it are re-enforced. This was particularly seen in terms of help-seeking, in terms of who participants were willing to receive support from. For example, in order to avoid a disruption to his identity as someone who does not require support, John said of receiving support specifically from a food bank:

I've never been to a food bank and never will because I think that's degrading, I've got to keep that bit of respect for myself, you know what I mean?

- John, 58, Glasgow area, medically retired

The use of the word degrading to describe food bank attendance indicates the symbolic significance certain experiences of food insecurity have for some individuals. John's suggestion that attendance would symbolise a lowering of his self-worth is aligned with his assertion that resistance enabled him to maintain a perceived sense of dignity. John was recruited through a charity which provides a low-cost café, a source of support for food insecurity that was deemed acceptable to him. This raises questions around the symbolic importance of payment. Payment symbolises having earned the food you are eating. It was important to John's identity to be someone who could provide for himself. The payment for food, appeared to symbolise to him that he was someone who is not (entirely) reliant on charity.

Other participants actively resisted the idea of re-thinking their life narrative to maintain their social role. Whilst Ashtak experienced a disruption in his life narrative and sense of self through help seeking (section 6.2.4.1), and John was particular in the type of help he was willing to seek, some participants actively

resisted the idea of re-thinking their life narrative to maintain their social role, including making sacrifices to their quality of life, to continue being seen as an independent and functional individual. Scott explained how he avoided telling his family about his food insecurity and financial precarity to maintain his role within the family:

Scott: That exacerbated it by borrowing money from the wrong source. It saved me going to family, the embarrassment of going to family, they are also struggling, you know.

[Kathryn]: Yes, so are your family, are they aware of how much you've been struggling over the last wee while?

Scott: No, not at all, no... It's my problem and they've got their own problems... And I've always been a supporter as opposed to, you know, a taker or someone who needs, needs support, you know.

- **Scott**, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Here, Scott discussed the steps he took to avoid losing his sense of himself as a someone who helps others rather than someone who requires help. Prior to this he discussed having been a support worker for a number of years and so the prospect of becoming the person that required support, particularly in his family, was not something he had experienced before. This change in status led him to borrow from a “loan shark” rather than asking his family for help. This caused him subsequent financial difficulties and exacerbated his food insecurity. The subsequent financial difficulties were caused by being required to pay back over £200 compared to the £80 which he borrowed to pay an unexpected phone bill. For Scott, borrowing money from an unscrupulous source, with high interest rates, longer term debt, emotional strain and a possible physical threat was considered lower risk than borrowing from family and the resulting challenge to his sense of self by switching roles to being the supported rather than the supporter. This desire to preserve identity may cause participants additional harm through limiting the support avenues they are willing to explore.

6.2.5 Biographical-Flow: the inevitability narrative

For some participants, the circumstances leading to their food insecurity were not necessarily considered disruptive, but rather an inevitable part of their narrative in the context of mounting debt and insufficient income. Faircloth *et*

al (2004) describes this inevitability narrative as biographical flow - the process by which people make sense of their circumstances as the logical extension of their on-going lives. This was particularly clear in Mark's account, who described having grown up in poverty.

For Mark, this sense was conveyed in how difficult it was for him to manage his finances despite him implementing budget management techniques:

So, on the 7th, I take my money out, and I split it over four envelopes. And then each week, you obviously pay your vitals, gas and electric, which I've no been doing for the past four months, because my benefits changed so much, that I'm now on half of what I used to get. So that's what I do, I try and split it o'er the four weeks, so that I definitely have money. Not for me, it's mainly so that I've got money for the kids, because we do Mother and Toddler group, and it all costs money.
- Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

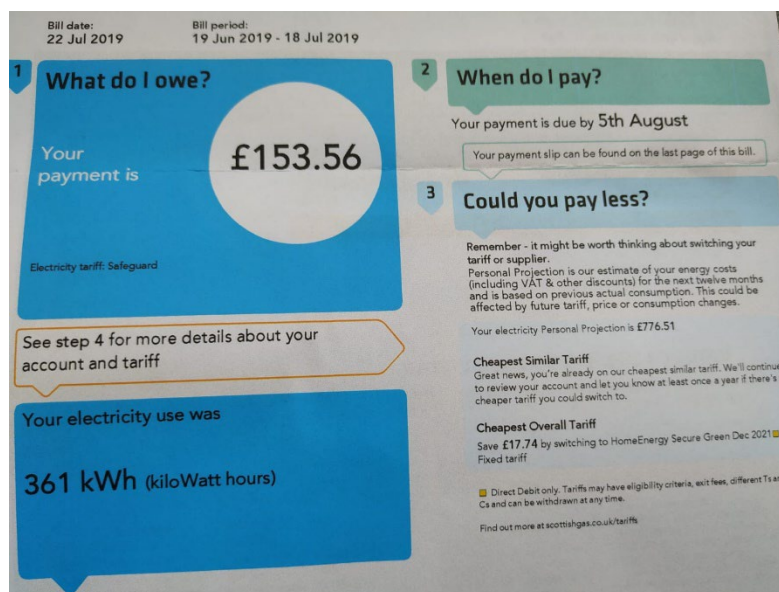


Figure 6-10: Photograph of electricity bill taken by Mark

The use of the envelopes aimed to provide him with a budget for one month, to enable him to prioritise and participate in family activities, however, due to the significant reduction in income associated with benefit changes he described how this financial management technique was ineffective:

But yeah, by week three, I've already started dipping into week four, possibly week five, you know, for the month coming ahead. So it's a never-ending cycle of debt.
- Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

He illustrated this cycle of debt with a photograph of his electricity bill. He described how he has looked into options to make his utilities more affordable:

There's people out there who come thegether [together] to buy their electricity and gas, but it's not in my area. So, because when you club altogether, you can get the companies to give you a minimum charge, rather than you paying per unit... But not in my area, so I'm not allowed to, which is just typical.

- Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

This example indicates how challenging budget management can be, and the difficulties people can face in trying to reduce their expenditure. For Mark, he described being unable to ever escape the cycle of debt he found himself in, particularly given his recent decline in income. His use of “which is just typical” indicates that he was accustomed to accumulating disadvantages.

This section has examined how the experience of food insecurity can result in a disruption of a person's life narrative affecting their sense of self, or by reinforcing a sense of self. For some, it may not be characterised as a particularly disruptive life experience, rather an inevitability of their life course.

6.2.6 Mobilisation of resources

This section will explore the third aspect of Bury's framework of biographical disruption. This component is described as the ways in which an individual responds to their condition. These responses include 'the mobilisation of resources in facing an altered situation' (Bury, 1982, p. 170) and in the context of food insecurity relates to how a person copes with their food insecurity. Whilst some of the ways in which participants cope with their food insecurity have been touched on already, this section will focus on the different types of support individuals used.

All of the participants in this study described how they employed coping strategies in dealing with their altered situation. Coping refers to the different adaptations and strategies an individual may employ, making use of what resources they have available, in order to manage a condition or situation

(Hobfoll *et al.*, 1996). The ways in which a person responds to an altered situation can involve re-negotiating existing relationships and learning active coping. Active coping refers to the active steps which are taken to reduce the negative impact of a given stressor, in this case being unable to access and afford food.

Being unable to access food conveniently was often discussed by men in terms of their active attempts to cope, through various methods. One method of coping described by many participants was seeking out support. A commonly used support typology is one which breaks support down into the following constructs: emotional, instrumental, informational or appraisal (Ostberg and Lennartsson, 2007). Instrumental support refers to tangible support and services such as the provision of material resources. Instrumental support appeared frequently within the types of support that participants received. For example, many found support in community groups founded on a shared value or purpose - for example those founded in community gardening or providing support to fathers. Groups may both provide instrumental support in terms of reducing food insecurity through the provision of food, but also in providing emotional support such as reducing feelings of social isolation brought about by food insecurity. Additionally, they may provide informational support by providing advice and information which can improve a person's material situation.

The typology of different supports is often opaque, with types of support overlapping, particularly when one organisation or person is the source (Ostberg and Lennartsson, 2007). This overlapping was conveyed by participants who described the groups and services they attended - such as for gardening (Joseph) and parenting (Mark) - as offering holistic support, particularly in terms of instrumental and emotional support. They provided instrumental support in the alleviation of food insecurity in various ways such as helping individuals to access social security payments which they were entitled to but may have been unable to access, directing to food aid groups and providing referrals if required. The combination of practical support and emotional support helped men to manage some of the negative side effects associated with food insecurity such as the frustrating experience of systemic issues making access to support difficult (as explored in Chapter Five) and feelings of isolation.

Participants' accounts of their lived experience of food insecurity featured descriptions of food aid groups. These groups generally provided instrumental support in alleviating the hunger symptom of food insecurity through the provision of food. Groups took on many different forms such as food banks, community food fridges and community cafes. Some food aid groups were a combination of food aid types, such as providing a meal to be eaten in a café type setting, as well as a package of foods to be taken away. Below, topics identified by participants in relation to accessing these forms of support will be described.

6.2.6.1 Community Resources

Participants frequently described using community-based resources in order to help them access food. The experiences of these resources varied with some perceived more positively than others. Scott described a positive experience of accessing a community food organisation:

And they are awful nice, non-judgemental, no questions asked, you don't need a ticket which is a big thing to me, you know, you don't need to go and ask someone to refer you, you just walk in. And the very fact that they are taking food that is going to be binned, it's still good food, it's still in date and stuff like that, you know.

- **Scott**, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

For Scott, being able to access this resource without a referral made this an acceptable source of instrumental support. Most participants had had involvement with food aid groups although some participants refused to access certain types of food aid as discussed in section 5.3. This particular organisation had removed a potential barrier to access (no referral required) which appeared to encourage him to use it. Scott went on to describe how he was able to contribute to this community resource:

Most days I go down and if I don't take, I bring something down. When I got, the last giro I got... they never give you sugar. So, I got 10 bags of sugar and it cost me £5 for 10 bags of sugar. 10 bags of sugar those are worth a lot more to someone who doesn't have that bag of sugar. So, that's the community fridge, so they are awfully nice people.

- **Scott**, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Scott described how he used his most recent social security payment to contribute to the community resource. It appeared that feeling part of something and wanting to contribute to making it better helped to mitigate some of the feelings associated with his current circumstances. Being able to provide something to the organisation and community which had helped him was clearly a source of joy, conveyed in his demeanour and tone when describing the organisation. Additionally, he explained that he was considering starting to volunteer there:

I'm thinking of volunteering with one or two... it's a wee sense of community that's happening that I've not experienced before which is good.

- **Scott**, 51, Glasgow, unemployed

Contributing to community resources was described by other participants as a means of coping. The contribution helped both in terms of practical support received by being part of the resource and in terms of providing participants with a sense of accomplishment. Struan conveyed two ways in which volunteering had helped him previously:

I used to do a lot of homeless volunteering when I lived in [redacted English town] which was actually quite useful from my own point of view because when I became homeless, I knew exactly what to do.

- **Struan**, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed

And currently:

I still do my work at the charity shop. By and large I'm trying to stay away from the free foodstuff because there's people in more need than me. That being said at the charity shop we do have a free food initiative and we get a massive delivery from M&S, Marks & Sparks. Well, we have to collect it and I was given basically first pick and never look a gift horse in the mouth.

- **Struan**, 48, Edinburgh, part time employed



Figure 6-11: Photograph of food from volunteering taken by Struan

Struan provides a considered account of his volunteering - which reflects his analysis of his own need - not as great as others, as well as the potential unexpected benefits of volunteering in terms of additional access to community resources.

Michael provided another example of the role of volunteering, and described it as something he would like to do again:

Michael: Aye. I was a volunteer at the time. I need to get back into that long term because I do miss it. Say to them I can still help you, man, but just not every day. Just commit two days to volunteering. Back into the café then.

[Kathryn]: *What do you enjoy about it?*

Michael: Just getting up and helping and I love in the kitchens, give people their tea and giving them their dinners and that... I like it. That was my recovery, helping others.

- **Michael**, 48, Glasgow, unemployed

Michael had previously found volunteering in his community helped him to cope with his alcoholism. Whilst currently unable to volunteer, it is something he was hopeful of doing in the future, due to the benefits he received as a result of being well known to the community centre. He was attending the community centre he used to volunteer at, receiving free meals for himself and his daughter. In this way his contribution to his community could be seen both in terms of previously providing a source of accomplishment and belonging, and at the time of interview, providing practical support for himself and his young

daughter. Later in the interview he went on explain how the community centre further enabled him to provide for his young daughter:

There's a thing on a Thursday at [the] community centre, and just have play time for the weans and that... At Christmas here the community centre let me pick my stuff. She says, aye, we want yous in before anybody else. I had a couple of things. I was like, I can't decide what one. She said, what do you mean by one? Take as much as you want.
- Michael (48, Glasgow, unemployed)

Being part of the community centre enabled Michael to cope with the additional financial burden that Christmas can bring, particularly on parents with children. The relationships that are developed through frequent attendance of community groups can enable individuals to cope with the budget constraints that lead to their food insecurity. The worker saying 'we want yous in before anybody else' indicates that in this setting Michael had preferential status, a contrast to how he was generally treated in wider society. This preferential status appears to have come about through him frequently utilising a group which was based out of the community centre, creating familiarity with staff. In this case it appears staff wished to give priority to parents who they have seen receiving support more frequently at the community centre.

For some participants the importance of community groups could not be overstated. Joseph, late 40s, highlighted just how vital community had been to his wellbeing in the past:

Joseph: *Community gardens. Community growing. Community cafes.*

[Kathryn]: *So community is super important to you then?*

Joseph: *When I was homeless for a year, Kathryn, that's how I survived. I would have died. Through friends and community, otherwise I would have died. Literally. I would have died.*
- Joseph (late 40s, Glasgow, unemployed)

Joseph described how he was enabled to cope with extremely challenging circumstances by support from community groups and the friends he met there. They provided him with instrumental support such as food, emotional support through friendship and informational support around where he could access support safely. The social interactions and the resources generated from these

interactions are vital to the wellbeing of individuals. Joseph's repetition of the word indicates the importance of community to him, with him also saying my name to ensure I was really listening to him. The importance of this sense of community has been previously highlighted in food insecure adults amongst older adults who frequent community gardens (Mullis, 2016). This sense of community and the social interactions which go alongside it have been found to be important both in terms of short-term happiness and for longer term health (Pinker, 2015).

For some participants, community groups were a positive and at times vital resource, however mobilisation of resources to access community groups was not always associated with a positive experience for participants. For example, participants discussed limitations on their ability to access certain resources such as Brandon:

I used to attend the food bank at [area in Edinburgh] and the manager there undertook a review, aye, and said that I had been coming for some considerable time. I think she said 50 weeks, aye, and that I was no longer eligible. However, about three weeks beforehand that same person went and accused me of doing something that I didn't do... The given person just kept talking over me and wasn't willing to listen and I said to myself, just keep quiet. If people aren't going to listen just don't say anything.

- **Brandon**, (54, Edinburgh, unemployed)

Brandon was recruited for this study at the foodbank he described here. In the time between our first meeting and interview (just over two weeks) he had been denied access to the food bank. Brandon said this decision was made after a false accusation was made about him and felt the suddenly imposed time limit was the result of this supposed transgression. This food bank provided in-situ meals and health support from a nurse. The loss of this long-term support, and the associated rituals and relationships developed over his almost year-long attendance, was upsetting for Brandon and he was frustrated with the sudden removal of a resource he used to cope. Additionally, his silence in the face of the accusation conveyed the lack of power he had to impact his situation. This example indicates the potential for pressure on individuals to mobilise alternative resources rapidly. In response Brandon described looking for another

food bank source which he could access and how he had become more reliant on the use of his plastic bottle collection discussed earlier in the chapter.

Community support was of vital importance to many of the men in this study, and it was a resource utilised to mobilise both practical and emotional support. However, they could be a site of harm for some participants, particularly in the context of sudden support withdrawal.

6.2.6.2 Interpersonal Resources

Some participants mobilised interpersonal relationships in order to help them cope with their food insecurity. Across the men's accounts relationships with friends were described as sources of support more often than relationships with family members. Michael outlined how his friend, who he met at a charity which supports individuals with issues with drug and alcohol use, brought him and his daughter meals a couple of times a week:

[Kathryn]: Is there anything else about how you get or afford food that you want to tell me?

Michael: Like people bringing me stuff, dinner round twice a week? One night he came in, it was lemon drizzle cake. I was like, where did you get that? He was like, I like baking. I was like, what? Lemon drizzle cake, caramel cake, he [brings] around a lot of cakes. I says if there's any going spare! Curries and macaroni cheese, and bolognaise, mince and tatties... Aye, so he feeds me twice a week for dinner. You're guaranteed at least two of them. Any time he makes a curry he knows [or] mince and tatties, he always brings a plate. The wean [child] likes the food.

- Michael, 48, Glasgow, unemployed

Having a small but reliable social network enabled Michael and his daughter to eat warm, home-cooked meals at least twice per week. He described himself as not having any interest in food, but realised he had to make "more of an effort" when he unexpectedly gained custody of his daughter. He additionally described how he can rely on his friend for support with childcare. Michael described mobilising multiple resources in order to ensure he can provide for himself and his daughter, both the interpersonal support described here, and the community support described above. The instrumental and emotional support provided by

his friend, in addition to the support provided through a community group, shows how in the face of an altered situation - for Michael having someone else to feed and care for forced him to become more resourceful in the face of exacerbated food insecurity - a person can mobilise resources to cope.

For most participants who had interpersonal relationships where the other people were aware of their situation, it was friends, rather than family, who they confided in. Cameron (39, Aberdeen, unemployed) had confided in a friend, and together they had found ways of capitalising on free bets in casinos which could leave them each with five pounds to spend on food - he had taken a picture of a flyer from the casino to represent this.



Figure 6-12: Photograph of casino flyer taken by Cameron

An additional benefit to this was that membership to the casino was free and provided free tea and coffee meaning he and his friend could always go together for a hot drink. Another of his friends would invite him over for tea. Cameron was learning how to cook following the breakdown of his marriage and he shared how his friend teaching him enabled him to buy a wider range of reduced ingredients with his increased skill set, as well as an opportunity to socialise and eat with a friend.



Figure 6-13: Photograph of cooking with a friend taken by Cameron

For Paul, friends mobilised on his behalf, providing him with leftovers to take away after social gatherings to ensure he could get something to eat for a couple of days. Now in a slightly more comfortable financial position, he reflected on this time:



Figure 6-14: Photograph of 'doggy bag' taken by Paul

I used to take doggy bags home from my friend's house because he knew I was super poor. I just used to eat that for a couple of days and save me spending some cash. It was more of a handout situation, which isn't something you're proud of but, you know, it's, you've got to swallow your pride sometimes. I think given the circumstances, it was pretty obvious I was struggling, I never had any disposable income, could never afford to go out. So, I think, you know, actually I had some good friends that came round and usually came hand in tow with food and beverages.
 - Paul, 31, Aberdeen, full time employed

Paul did not outright disclose to his friends that he was struggling financially, however his friends noticed and stepped in at times to provide him with food. Despite the fact his precarity was not vocalised by those providing support, he

described having to 'swallow his pride' in order to take the food provided. This phrase indicates embarrassment or shame, regarding needing support, even when offered by friends.

In contrast, other participants described how friends were also in a comparable situation, and so their food insecurity was discussed but was not considered anything remarkable:

Most people down here are all in the same sort of situation, yeah... So they all... Yeah, yeah, everybody understands. You know, if there is a special offer or something then, yeah, we all find out about it, you know.
- Fraser, 45, Edinburgh, unemployed

Fraser explained that his friends in similar situations would help each other out as and when they could, sometimes pooling resources or sharing information about new free food sources. For those for whom food insecurity was a new experience, in particular those affected by relationship breakdown such as Cameron and Paul, sometimes friends offered a source of both instrumental and emotional support. The support provided by friends is different depending on the food security status of friends, indicated in the Paul and Fraser's accounts. Paul is isolated in his experience and accepts support (but is slightly ashamed) whereas Fraser experiences support as an "all in it together" situation with his friends. While both accept instrumental or informational support from friends that is important in coping with their everyday experience of food insecurity, the impact of that on the relationships and on the sense of self is different related to this. Those who were better able to mobilise resources often had existing strong interpersonal relationships; a way of coping, particularly for those without these relationships, was a requirement to cope by seeking out solutions without community or interpersonal support.

6.2.6.3 Individualising coping

Participants were adept at using the limited resources they had available, using their knowledge and skills to engage in active coping. This manifested itself in a variety of actions from budgeting, to engaging in foraging, and growing their own vegetables. A variety of different skills were deployed in order to cope with food insecurity.

Several participants described budgeting to enable them to stretch their limited resources. Participants described checking their online banking daily to ensure they had the funds they expected, particularly prior to going to do a food shop. Mark described how he used different envelopes to budget for the month. In doing so he highlights the ways in which participants will try to ensure their money is budgeted to enable them to buy food - and in Mark's case - ensure his children are able to benefit from attending activities with other children. Budgeting is an essential component of being able to cope. It takes knowledge to 'balance the books' and is particularly challenging when there are significant financial constraints. Mark outlined being unable to pay for his gas and electricity within his current budget, due to a substantial reduction in his social security payment. Even so, he demonstrated being able to utilise his knowledge resources in order to obtain food and provide his children with their normal activities.

Wide-ranging examples of ways to cut costs were shared by participants. Most of the men who were able to access shops described shopping in the reduced section in supermarkets to maximise what they could get for their money. This had downsides including a lack of choice and requiring daily trips to the shops due to the short dates on most reduced items. Some participants also described using their knowledge of foraging in order to enable them, at certain times of the year, to be able to obtain fresh fruit, herbs and wild garlic. This served to add variety to their diet with no additional cost. A particularly novel way of cutting costs was described by one participant - the use of a storm kettle for boiling water, utilising combustible materials such as dried leaves and twigs. Joseph describes how this helped him save money and maintain his environmental ideals:

This is my big investment that I laid out. This cost me £50. It's called a storm kettle. In Ireland it's known as a Kelly Kettle. And this saves a little on the gas, or if you've got electric, it'd save on electric, having a cup of tea... so I've got two flasks, Thermos flasks. And so this... oh I do... I do that... so any waste cardboard that I get, so if finished eating something I've purchased or [man's name's] given me free I can burn it in the storm kettle and then the hot water once it's boiled goes in the Thermos flask and that's me set up for a good few hours for brews... so

I'm not constantly boiling the electric kettle or using a gas kettle or just boiling up water in a saucepan.

- **Joseph**, late 40s, Glasgow, unemployed

Joseph indicated this technique has reduced his monthly energy bills to below ten pounds a month. The decision to use a storm kettle was both cost and environmentally driven and is an example of the diverse knowledge participants use in order to reduce ongoing costs. He identified that this was a significant investment, however the longer-term benefits and usefulness of the product were worth the initial outlay. Other participants made investments with time and/or skill, such as Cameron, who would do trade swaps with friends, whereby he would help fix their car in exchange for a haircut or a home-cooked meal. This investment in effort allowed him to access resources that otherwise would have been beyond his reach at this time.

Bury's (1982) third aspect of biographical disruption is the way in which individuals respond to their altered situation. All the participants in this study displayed altered behaviour, and had adapted to their situation, although given the necessity of food it could be argued they did not have a feasible alternative. For some their coping strategies revolved around community group involvement, accessing food groups, or obtaining help through a support worker. For others it involved having friends who were aware of their situation, swapping skills for food or other necessities, or becoming adept at financial management with limited resources. The concept of mobilisation of resources can be identified in the narratives of participants, however, focusing on these acts may risk individualising the issue of food insecurity. These acts of resilience take considerable labour, which is often time-consuming, unfair and serves to further entrench the inequalities participants were experiencing.

6.3 Biographical disruption and understanding food insecurity

Biographical disruption has been critiqued as a framework within health literature and some of these critiques may also be true when applied to food

insecurity. This section will look at the critiques of biographical disruption as they apply to food insecurity.

6.3.1 What is one more problem?

A consideration of biographical disruption for understanding food insecurity relates to a critique levelled more widely at the framework. (Sanderson *et al.*, 2011; Bell, Tyrrell and Phoenix, 2016). For those whose lives have been beset with difficulties, another experience or illness on top, may just be considered another setback they have to face. This may indicate that social class can mitigate the extent to which food insecurity is experienced as biographical disruption. Poverty is a complex and diverse experience, with individuals potentially experiencing multiple adverse events in their life. This can result in food insecurity being seen as another hurdle on the road to stability, rather than an experience which is excessively disruptive.

This concept of “just another difficulty” may be applicable to food insecurity as adverse events were a common feature in participants’ narratives. For example, John who is medically retired and was recruited through a community organisation described the physical, emotional, and financial abuse he had been subjected to:

That was a kitchen knife that, same as that one. She’s quite a violent woman and I’m not one of these guys that put my hands on women, I’m not like that, do you know what I mean? I’m a big softy really, but, no, then from that it just escalated, and she was always money, money and money and, you know, she always liked money, if I had change in my pocket rattling, she’d say, where did you get that from? And after 15 years of being dragged down all the time, I just had enough and I just left and got my own flat.

- John, 58, Glasgow area, medically retired

John described his experience of domestic abuse, which involved both physical attacks and financial control. During his interview, at the point John said “that was the kitchen knife” he pointed to deep scars on his body. Having experienced this type of repeated adverse event, it may affect the extent to which he viewed food insecurity as disruptive, given the physical violence he was at risk of, but at the time of the interview was free of. It seemed important to John to

convey that he himself was not violent. The description of himself as a “big softy” may have been intended to encourage me to view him as a gentle character, not one who participates in violence.

Mark (30s) discussed how more financial concerns are added to the pile, rather than something to be additionally concerned about in a way which typified how the “world” of food insecurity could be considered as just another thing to contend with. He discussed having previously been without electricity and his current accrual of debt in relation to his electricity bill:

Mark: Oh, yeah, I was cut off since 2012, to 2016, until I had my daughter. So then I had to reconnect to the gas main, basically. Otherwise, if I didn't have kids, I would have stayed off, you know. Minus ten was the worst temperature in my house. That was in 2010, when I first moved to [city name].

[Kathryn]: Yeah, that was a brutal winter.

Mark: Yeah. I didn't have any gas, no flooring down, no nothing, so it was extremely cold. But again, layer up, like you tell old people, put another layer on, you'll be fine. Yeah, so that's that. There's not much more I can say, other than, you know, it's just another debt. That, if you look at it, you could get stressed, but I'm easy going, so, it doesn't matter, it's only another debt that's racking up, you know.

[Kathryn]: Yeah, sort of, what's another one?

Mark: Yeah, pretty much. I mean, I've got a big folder of them, so, it's another one on top, it's fine.

- Mark, 36, Aberdeen, unemployed

This highlights that food insecurity is just one of many struggles when someone is unable to access adequate income or support. Mark described how he had lived for substantial periods of time with no access to gas, leaving him with no heating, and exposed to the elements. His assertion that it “it’s just another debt” and “it’s another one on top, it’s fine” is indicative of the overall picture of his finances, with the implausibility of him ever being able to pay off this debt so great that the level of was no longer important.

6.3.2 Multiple experiences of biographical disruption

In addition to the prospect of using biographical disruption from illness studies as a lens with which to view food insecurity through, it is worth noting that over half of the 18 participants disclosed living with chronic conditions. The experience of ill health with food insecurity has been documented more extensively in Chapter Five, section 5.4.3, with participants experiencing a range of long term physical and mental health conditions. An example of this is seen with Brandon, who described the effect of two of his chronic conditions on his day-to-day life:

Now, part of my insecurity is that I'm depressed. I suffer from depression. I have been for a long time, and I think it's branded as chronic, if not severe depression. And I suffer from ME or chronic fatigue syndrome also. You know, there's some days I can be, you know, running the country and other days I can't run a bath, and it's not pleasant.
- **Brandon, 54**, Edinburgh, unemployed

This shows that participants may be experiencing biographical disruption in multiple areas of their life trajectory, affecting how disruptive the experience of food insecurity is in their life. Participants who did not describe themselves as growing up in poverty, or who did not mention experiencing adverse events across the life course prior to those which were associated with the onset of food insecurity, appeared to experience food insecurity as biographical disruption more than their counterparts who had more experience of poverty and other adverse life events across the life course. This is in-keeping with the idea of biological flow, whereby when events are in keeping with expectations, they are less disruptive.

6.4 Discussion

This chapter has utilised Bury's conceptualisation of biographical disruption and explored the extent to which it provides a framework to understand the experiences of food insecurity as a disruptive life event among single men in Scotland. By outlining the ways in which the single men in this study experienced the disruptive effects of food insecurity, this chapter identifies the usefulness of

conceptualising food insecurity as biographical disruption. Applying the three core components of biographical disruption (disruption of taken for granted assumptions and behaviours; disruption of explanatory systems and mobilisation of resources) contributes to our understanding of men's experiences and perceptions of food insecurity and the ways in which they mitigate or cope with it.

Food insecurity can affect how individuals see themselves and their sense of self-worth, as well as changing how others perceive them. This is important in the context of food insecurity given previous work has found the experience to be associated with shame and stigma, framed by a neoliberal narrative which has prevailed in society, whilst poverty more generally has been seen as a personal failing (Jo, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Baumberg, 2016; Garthwaite, 2016b). The social costs and connotations of food insecurity are woven throughout the different aspects of biographical disruption, helping us to understand the social consequences of both being food insecure and trying to mitigate this experience. Biographical disruption provides a partial framework through which to understand food insecurity. The extent to which food insecurity was experienced as biographical disruption varied between individuals for reasons such as previous adverse life experiences and the resources they had available to mitigate the experience. This is in keeping with work focused on hepatitis C which argued that the extent to which a condition is experienced as biographical disruption is dependent on a host of factors such as: social exclusion, financial hardship, the prevalence of a condition within one's immediate social circle, the response of professionals and their personal history related to the condition (Harris, 2009). That the past experiences of individuals influence the extent to which they experience a condition as biographical disruption was also supported by Becker (1999). In a wide review of how Americans respond to many different forms of unanticipated events, bereavement and divorce amongst others, she suggests that 'developed' societies such as the United States, the expectation of social order mean moments of crisis are experienced as especially disruptive (Becker, 1999). This could be applicable to those who experienced a loss or partial loss of identity as a result of the disruptive events in their lives, including the experience of food insecurity, as often amongst participants these were individuals who reported

fewer adverse events across their life history.

When considering the complex and variable ways individuals live with a condition, it is important to consider individual histories in addition to the society and settings these conditions are being experienced within (Julia, 2003). Biographical disruption understands food insecurity through an individualistic lens, which may detract from food insecurity being a systemic issue beyond the control of participants. Food insecurity is a systemic social justice issue and the structural violence enacted on those experiencing food insecurity was explored in the previous chapter. The structural violence participants experience raises the question as to what extent food insecurity and related circumstances can be interpreted as 'disruption' to their lives, and to what extent it is merely a continuation of complexities relating to poverty, this will be discussed in Chapter Eight (discussion chapter). Through the powerful narratives of participants, it clear that food insecurity is a systemic social justice issue, which is experienced at individual level, with attempts made to mitigate the structural failings through mobilisation of resources. The analysis of these narratives and photographs provides a means through which share lived experience with the aim of generating social change - this will be explored in Chapter Seven. Participants experienced a disruption of taken for granted assumptions and behaviours in a variety of ways: through disrupted food preparation and disrupted food access and food choices. Participants described being unable to participate in standard cooking practices, both in terms of what would be considered culturally normal, and normal within their own household, by being unable to make hot meals and drinks and a move from eating with enjoyment to eating for survival. Participants described a loss of food choice, particularly in terms of relying on parcels from food banks or on what was reduced in the supermarket that day, often eating repetitive food stuffs or meals they did not like due to the lack of choice they faced. Drawing on Bury's framework, the inability to participate in standard cooking practice and the loss of food choices can be conceptualised as representing a disruption of taken for granted assumptions and behaviours in single men experiencing food insecurity.

In line with Bury's framework, the men also described the experience of disruption to explanatory systems. Their accounts reflected on loss of identity,

often tied with notions of masculinity around fatherhood and being able to be independent. Some individuals had to reconceptualise themselves as people who require help, a position several men had not previously occupied having considered themselves in the role of provider or fixer before. The loss of identity was most keenly felt in terms of suicidality, with one participant describing his suicidal ideation as a consequence of his living conditions. Others pushed back, attempting to reinforce their sense of identity by refusing to access food aid, framing it as a matter of self-respect. Both the reconceptualisation and the reinforcement of self in relation to accessing support related to food indicates the potential significance of food aid sites in particular, as a loss of identity. The application of the framework was less neat when looking at the disruption of explanatory systems, as for some men there was significant disruption however for others biographical reinforcement occurred, where aspects of identity are reinforced rather than disrupted (Carricaburu and Pierret, 1995).

The third and final aspect of Bury's framework is the mobilisation of resources in the face of an altered situation. Participants responded to their food insecurity by employing a range of strategies. These strategies included accessing formal and informal sources of support which could be broken down into different forms of support: community resources, interpersonal resources, and individualising coping. Participants described community resources such as community food organisations and parenting groups, as well as mobilising interpersonal relationships and drawing on their own knowledge and skills. For participants who had interpersonal relationships as support, this was most frequently friends, rather than family. Friends' support included providing food to take away or providing knowledge from previous experience on navigating food insecurity. Participants additionally engaged in individualised coping such as trading skills for a home cooked meal and foraging. All participants described some mobilisation of resources in response to their food insecurity, with a preference for less formal support such as friends and community organisations described in more positive terms than navigations of formalised support such as social security.

6.5 Summary

Biographical disruption provides a lens through which to understand food insecurity, however it can be critiqued particularly in reference to its individualisation of food insecurity and an inflexibility in accounting for food insecurity as one hurdle in a litany of hurdles in an individual's life. It is clear that the structural violence outlined in Chapter Five contributed to a coalescing of harms which resulted in less resources with which to weather disruptive life events such as bereavement, job loss and relationship breakdown, making them more vulnerable to experience food insecurity in the face of these events. However, long term exposure to structural violence also left individuals less "disrupted" by the experience of food insecurity on the whole, due to increased experience of navigating adverse experiences.

7 Lived experience in policy making and advocacy

7.1 Introduction

Socio-economic context, political priorities, and policy implementation have all been central motifs in the exploration of men's experiences of food insecurity described in this thesis. Policy decisions have contributed to food insecurity, particularly policy decisions related to the social security system (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Chapter One included a timeline of UK Austerity and related events (Figure 1-1 UK Austerity timeline 2008 - 2022 p.23) whilst in Chapter Two the relationship between implementation of social security policy and increasing food insecurity is discussed (section 2.5.2). In Chapter Five, based on men's accounts of their experiences the policies and their implementation are framed as structural violence and in Chapter Six participants described how instrumental support was required to navigate the system once new policies were in place (section 6.2.6).

Policy makers formulate, develop and alter the policies which have impacted so negatively on the participants in phase one of this study. A systematic review highlighted that UK austerity policies, particularly those associated with welfare reform, were associated with increased food insecurity and foodbank use (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Such policies contribute to the failure of the UK to meet its right to food obligations (Dowler and O'Connor, 2012). In the context of increasing food insecurity as a result of policy decisions, there are a range of actors working in the social policy space to advocate for food insecure individuals, for improved public policy/income security and against inadequate 'solution' of charitable food provision.

In this chapter, phase two of the study, will consider both the broader question of the role of lived experience in policy making and the more specific question of how the qualitative data gathered in phase one of this study is perceived, and

how it may be used to influence policy. As discussed in Chapter Two, COVID-19 restrictions disrupted recruitment of men. This provided me with an opportunity to analyse, reflect and include the recruitment of policy actors into the study. This chapter considers policy actors' practice of using accounts of lived experience, their perceptions of the data presented (generated from the emergent findings of participants' experiences in phase one), and postulations on the potential for lived experience and images of lived experience in policy moving forward.

7.1.1 Informing policy through lived experience research

Qualitative research of lived experience has long been a pillar within health and other social sciences, but its application in policy domains is more recent, with it gaining traction in different arenas: the third sector, NHS trusts and the Scottish Government (McKendrick and Brown, 2018). Lived experience documents the "social practices and everyday lives of people" (Stack, 1997, p. 191). Within academia it has been growing in popularity within areas of social policy, with it being adopted in studies as diverse as understanding climate change e.g. (Abbott and Wilson, 2014) to understanding parenting from prison e.g. (Charles, Muentner and Kjellstrand, 2019) as well as being utilised in studies of poverty (e.g. (Patrick, 2017; O'Connell, Knight and Brannen, 2019a)

The relationships between individual lived experience and the wider social and economic context of this experience have been discussed. McIntosh and Wright (2019) argue that lived experience research can identify a "structure of feeling" across different communities or groups which can transfer to an "immersion" in the concerns of people affected by policy processes and outcomes. This means that lived experience share elements of commonality, and accounts are not individualised to the point of being unable to find a "typical account". Concerns that lived experience can push social structures and causes to the background have been somewhat mitigated by research which contrasts lived experience against policy narratives and responses (Patrick, 2014). Lived experience research has also been used previously in this thesis as a means of highlighting structural violence, identified through individual narratives.

Lived experience is frequently of interest to advocacy groups, particularly in areas of mental health, disability, and poverty (Knifton and Inglis, 2020) - with participation acknowledged as a way of improving outcomes in a range of areas from service delivery to policy development (ibid). However, Horner raises three questions about who gets represented, by whom and how (Horner, 2016).

Researchers collecting and analysing data on lived experience to some extent play the role of a knowledge broker. Brokers are defined as middlemen, intermediaries or agents who act as negotiators, interpreters, messengers or commissioners between different groups or individuals. Researchers, through analysis, can be seen to act as an interpreter between participants and stakeholders. In this case the “how it is represented” and “who does the representing” are particular areas of concern. The “how it is represented” is the responsibility the researcher holds. These questions will be addressed more fully in the discussion with the findings from interviews with policy actors reflected.

Lived experience is used across a variety of different sectors, with its importance as an evidence source being argued by academics such as McIntosh and Wright (2019). In the context of eroding social policy, and the resultant harms, it is ever more important to be able to evidence these harms to advocate for those effected. Lived experience evidence in relation to food insecurity can inform the ways in which policies need revised to avoid inflicting harm. This research seeks to understand how lived experience more generally, and the lived experience evidence and emergent analysis from phase of this study, is perceived by policy actors. This chapter aims to answer the research questions:

3. What are the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the existing and potential role of lived experience in influencing social policy?
4. How do policy actors perceive qualitative data from lived experiences of food insecurity research and how might this data be used to influence policy in this area?

7.2 Findings

The policy actors interviewed had a range of experience in engaging with policy makers and using lived experience in their work, both to engage with outside policy makers and in the context of service planning and delivery. As shown in sample table 3.2 (p.90), policy actors from the third sector, non-governmental organisations, local authority, and Scottish Government. This section will explore policy actors' experiences and perspectives on the role of lived experience in the policy landscape and their perspectives on data from the lived experience of food insecurity in single men in Scotland.

7.2.1 Evidence of lived experience in policy making

This section will explore what policy actors understood “lived experience” to mean in the policy context, factors which they perceived as important when drawing on accounts of lived experience in the policy context, and how they felt different governments (Scotland and UK) received lived experience evidence.

7.2.1.1 Policy actors' understandings of lived experience

All policy actors were asked “What does the term “lived experience” mean to you?”. Whilst there was a broad consensus of what lived experience meant, there were dimensions to the understanding which varied. The quotes below are broadly representative of what policy actors understood the importance of lived experience to be:

The way that we use or we hear lived experience being used in our work in Scotland would be hearing directly from the people who have experience of that issue to understand what's going on in their lives and their experiences that will help us better inform our work as well as what we're asking the government to do in terms of local authority change or national policy change

- Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

I think it's absolutely essential that no matter what kind of policy you're talking about, whether it's to do with food justice and food insecurity or agriculture or... it's essential that you have the voices of people who that

policy is going to affect helping to inform that work.

- Development Officer, Third Sector, Dumfries and Galloway

Whilst there was a shared general sense of importance and focus on people impacted by a policy or service, policy actors highlighted different dimensions around the importance of lived experience. For example, as highlighted above for improved understanding by inclusion of perspective as well as to better inform advocacy. A frequent consideration was the importance of lived experience evidence for evaluation and service improvement.

As well as the notion of improving general understandings of a topic, the value of engaging with accounts of lived experience was discussed in relation to evaluation of services, and service improvement, particularly by those in the third sector:

An organisation like ourselves needs to be taking on board what that lived experience is, because although we might think we're doing a great job and managing to respond to it, we may well find that actually, that the experience of the beneficiary is not exactly the same as what we think it is, you know, so it's really important that folk just don't think that they're providing a brilliant service, but then testing that against what the people who are actually experiencing it.

- Development Officer, Third Sector, Aberdeen

He described how consulting individuals with lived experience can help to improve service delivery, and potentially reduce the gap between the expectations of those running a service, and the reality of those experiencing the service. This again highlights the shared understanding amongst participants of the importance of the focus on lived experience, of involving individuals with experience of a particular topic in conversations. However, it is indicative of the divergence amongst policy actors of what is meant by gathering lived accounts. Importantly, he highlighted that those with lived experience need to be listened to - that is to say, involving individuals needs to go beyond merely having them be present, but actually heard, with action taken in response to the experiences they share.

Many of the participants indicated that lived experience allowed for a more

informed understanding of a topic. This experiential knowledge cannot be obtained without engagement with those who have experience of a topic. Engaging those with lived experience may be particularly valuable in instances where the experience is relatively invisible to wider society:

I suppose it's about trying to capture individuals or groups or communities' lives, like, their day-to-day lives and their experience in their day-to-day lives. It might not always be familiar to, let's call it, you know, like, mainstream society. And it sometimes can be quite hidden and quite...well, invisible really, I think in terms of other people's experience. So, it gives the opportunity to, kind of, have a good look at, potentially, it may be a policy area or an area of practice where you want to be confident that you're capturing that experience in terms of influencing and shaping, potentially, policy and making it relevant for real people's lives.

- Councillor, Local Authority, Aberdeen

This policy actor describes how lived experience offers the opportunity to bring experiences which may not be the norm into the consciousness of wider society and allow those experiences to be considered during policy design. This speaks to the invisibility of individuals who are culturally remote, discussed in section 5.5.1, and the impact that can be had when lesser seen experiences are made visible. Such as an improvement in the quality of policy which is made, for example through a reduction in negative consequences of a policy.

The importance of being clear on the purpose of sharing lived experience with others in policy making was raised by two of the policy actors:

When you're telling that story what's the added value of bringing in a quotation here from someone's experience? Well, the added value is making it clear to someone in a decision-making role why that matters or why that's distinct or what brings some meaning to it, I guess.

- Senior Project Officer, NGO, Edinburgh

This consideration was highlighted by particularly in the context of briefing policymakers in government, for example when giving a presentation on a topic or providing a written research brief on a topic. In the context of a time-poor policymaker, ensuring the lived experience accounts contributed to understanding the impact of a decision was important to several of the policy actors interviewed. Participants highlighted lived experience in this context as

being able to add meaning to numbers. The need to be clear on the purpose of adding a quotation from lived experience was an important consideration for some policy actors, to ensure impact and avoid wasting limited time with which to convey a policy action point. By removing some of the requirement to act as a knowledge broker, more time was available with which to focus attention on policy solutions.

The policy actors interviewed conveyed a shared sense of the importance of lived experience, viewing it as a method for adding value to their organisations and policy work. Broadly speaking this added value came from recognising the value of those with an applied understanding of the consequences of current policies and service decisions and allowing them to exert epistemic influence.

7.2.1.2 Experts by experience

Policy actors frequently used the term ‘experts by experience’ when discussing lived experience, particularly when considering examples of lived experience from professional practice.

*It’s really important for us to consult with experts by experience
...people who know exactly what it actually means to be in poverty and
be affected by food poverty, because they’ve experienced it themselves.*
- Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London

Lived experience and experts by experience were used almost interchangeably by policy actors. Specific groups were often created to be the “experts by experience” at a particular meeting or event:

*Oftentimes people have experience, and they don’t necessarily talk
about it, or they might be in the room as campaigners or data collators
or foodbank monitors, but they might often say it, so you can’t always
assume, you have to assume that there might be experts by experience in
any conversation, really. It’s a mistake that’s sometimes made, but
there’s an assumption that there’s sort of an othering that goes on about
something happening to them, as it were, but it could be any of us, and
it could happen to any of us any time.*
(Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London)

Whilst creating a specific group to be the “experts by experience” can ensure their voices are heard, it may also have downsides. People can be, and are,

more than just one thing, occupying multiple roles simultaneously. Asking individuals to identify themselves as an expert by experience may be othering them, putting them into a different category from others in the room who are not identified by having that experience. Another risk of creating groups of people who are experts by experience is missing out on other valuable perspectives, which are also rooted in experiential knowledge, because they are not wearing the label of “experience” on that particular day. However, having groups of ‘experts by experience’ can ensure that experiential knowledge makes its way into important policy conversations:

Well, I think one of my favourite phrases to use - this is kind of a bit of a cliché - is, nothing about us, without us, is for us
 - Development Officer, Third Sector, Dumfries and Galloway

This phrase “nothing about us, without us, is for us” conveys the need to ensure those who a policy will affect are both included, and listened to, in discussions around the policy. The policy actor described it as being “a bit of a cliché”, referring to the increase in usage of the phrase. This perhaps indicates concern that it might not be taken seriously if it is considered clichéd. In terms of being used in the lived experience context lived experience data is most well known in disability rights activism, having been traced to South African disability rights activists in the 1980s (Charlton, 2000). Collating and publicising lived experience accounts is an approach that has since been adopted by organisations representing a variety of topics such as substance use and mental health rights. It serves to recognise the self-determination of ensuring policies are decided with representation, and active participation, from people who are affected by that policy.

Although not specified by policy actors, from their accounts it appeared that “expert by experience” sits with “nothing about us, without us” - where individuals are identifying themselves as having lived experience of a topic and want that to be specifically recognised. Whilst “lived experience”, is more of an over-arching phrase, used to describe various forms of engagement such as co-production or evidence from lived experience research. The following section

will explore some of the considerations the policy actors made when drawing on lived experience in policy making.

7.2.1.3 Temporality of lived experience for the policy process

Policy actors frequently attempted to explain what qualified as lived experience. The extent to which experience on a topic was useful or appropriate was mentioned by several of the policy actors, who appeared to be trying to access knowledge which would be considered valid by outsiders without invalidating the experiences of those who fell outside of those parameters:

Something that we sort of grapple with sometimes. Because there's kind of the question of when lived experience stops being - I don't know if valid is the right word - but you know, if someone experienced poverty ten years ago, are they still the right person to speak from the perspective of someone with experience of poverty if they're not experiencing poverty? So if we think that someone has experience of poverty, even if it was ten years ago and they can still relate that to contemporary policy issues, then we think that they do actually have a legitimate...they can talk about it from a perspective of lived experience, even if it's not entirely current?... So, for us, it's a fairly broad concept, I think. But the important thing for the activists we work with is that they're able to relate their experience to contemporary policy issues in some way...I think the important thing for us is that the insights or the perspectives or people's analysis or whatever is able to be related to things that we're trying to shift the dialogue now. Or things we're trying to change now. Not to say that someone with historic experience isn't valid at all, but it's more just that for us the focus is always on policy in the here and now and trying to shift things now. So that's kind of where we come from.

- Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

To be what I would call an expert by experience, somebody would have recent knowledge of whatever, whether it's disability or poverty...yeah, because many of us might have experience from some time in the past but if it's quite a distant past it's not necessarily relevant to the current situation.

- Chair/Senior Policy Advisor, Public Body and Third Sector, Edinburgh

The policy actors here exemplify the considerations conveyed by many of the other policy actors of conditions necessary for the relevance of a person's lived experience. Temporality was an often-cited consideration in whether a person's experience was relevant, with the recency of experience the main consideration

identified by policy actors, particularly in the context of lived experience of poverty. This was considered to be due to a number of policy changes, those with long past experience of poverty may not be able to sufficiently speak to the current experience of poverty. Whilst certain aspects of their experience would very much resonate with those living in poverty under the current system, they would not have the relevant experience to speak to effects of that specific policy. However, the tension between navigating the need for experience, which is contemporaneous with certain policies, and not invalidating the experiences of those with more historic experience, was articulated clearly by Senior Policy and Parliamentary Officer in the quote above. Including individuals with lived experience involves trying to balance being inclusive alongside ensuring the most accurate lived experience evidence is put forward.

7.2.1.4 Lived experience: poor practice

When lived experience is incorporated in the policy landscape in a way which is tokenistic, or without sufficient consideration, it can be detrimental to those with lived experience. It can also lead to a missed opportunity to make meaningful change. Utilising accounts of lived experience in media coverage, with a view to influencing discussion around a topic, was described:

I think sometimes you can see quite poor practice in terms of involvement of people with lived experience in participation. Too often there's a kind of, particularly in policy or particularly media comms work, there's a kind of case study approach. That can be quite othering, I think. You know, it's like look at the poor person, isn't this terrible? Let's put them out to the media to speak about how terrible it is. And then the professional organisation will sweep in and talk about the policy solution. And for us that's just quite extractive. I think it can be quite - I don't know if manipulative is the right word - not manipulative but it can just be a little bit, putting people in quite difficult situations. Particularly if there's media work involved.

- Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

Concerns around “othering” individuals when labelling them as the ‘experts by experience’ have been identified earlier in this chapter. These concerns of ‘othering’ were amplified when involving individuals with lived experience in a media context. When individuals or groups are labelled as not fitting within

social norms, they are at risk of stigmatisation and shame. Involving individuals with lived experience in media work can be impactful, but it can also be harmful (Lentfer, 2018). Policy actors need to be considerate of the impact that being “the face” of a topic may have on a person or group. This is, without doubt, difficult terrain to navigate to ensure that organisations are not disempowering individuals by making decisions about their involvement for them. However, as identified, there is a risk of individuals being put in uncomfortable situations and the impact of this should be a consideration of organisations.

There are sensitivities which must be considered when drawing citizens in to policy conversations. The policy actor above describes how organisations will take up the conversation at the point at which it turns to policy solutions. Rather than being an opportunity for self-determination (section 7.2.1.2), instead those with lived experience may be being disempowered with their lived experience accounts used only to understand the problem, without necessarily being allowed to contribute to solution development.

7.2.1.5 Divergence between Scottish and UK context

The policy actors described their perceptions and experiences of how different governments - the UK Government and the Scottish Government - engaged with lived experience for policy making. All of the policy actors spoken to were based in the UK, working in Scotland or UK-wide, with varying levels of engagement at the Government level- with some working for charities which lobbied government, some working at the local government level and others provided briefings to ministers. Among policy actors generally, the Scottish Government was perceived to be receptive to accounts of lived experience informing policy:

In terms of policy there is a real willingness and I suppose it depends which policy you're meaning. I think from a Scottish Government perspective I think there is a real focus on ensuring that they have at least a platform or a mechanism to listen to people with lived expertise of poverty, for example [Social Security Experience Panels]. And I think with the set up through social security in Scotland, I think maybe lived experience panels, people that would be recipients of the benefits that they're going to be administering, they're making an effort to listen to people who would have experience or have had experience of that. So, I

think there is a willingness to listen to people with lived expertise on that level.

- Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

The willingness described here exemplifies a sentiment that was frequently described by participants, particularly those who had more direct engagement with Scottish Government. The Scottish Government are becoming responsible for some of the benefits currently delivered by the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and so set up “Social Security Experience Panels” in order to include lived experience in the delivery of some social security payments. The building of specific mechanisms for input was perceived by policy actors to represent a willingness to engage with those with lived experience, however the extent to which willingness translated to policy action was more queried:

I think listening to people's one thing but then translating it into policy decisions or policy action or policy change is another. And I think that's probably where people either don't know or are more hesitant to take on the recommendations or the knowledge or the expertise that the people are providing.

- Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

Whilst most policy actors praised Scottish Government for being more open to lived experience informing their policies, they also expressed scepticism about the extent to which insights from lived experience was incorporated into policy. Several participants, suggested that whilst the Scottish Government appeared to listen to lived experience that may not translate into concrete action, thus being considered potentially performative. However, despite concerns around the potential performative nature of the engagement with lived experience, when compared to the UK Government the Scottish Government was perceived as being much more open to lived experience evidence:

Interviewee: I think lived experience is for me, in terms of the policy impact, is the most impactful, for sure. At the Scottish level, certainly.

Interviewer: Do you feel it's different between the two?

Interviewee: In terms of Scotland and UK Government? Definitely. I mean, I think the political contexts are so different. I think the governments are very different in their approach to social security and to poverty in general. That's not to say the Scottish

Government is perfect, because it absolutely isn't. There's always much more that it can do. But even just in terms of getting access to ministers and that kind of thing, and having some sort of receptive ears, it's very challenging at UK level. It just is. Whereas at Scottish level, I think we...again, the Scottish Government definitely doesn't do everything that we want them to do and we're constantly campaigning for them to do more. But we are kind of pushing at an open door in terms of engaging with them. And we don't get the same thing at UK level at all.

- Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

This policy actor had direct experience of attempting to engage with both governments in their job role as a senior policy and parliamentary officer. Their experience echoes the perspective shared by most of the policy actors interviewed, that the Scottish Government is more receptive to hearing about the lived experience of their policies - particularly those which relate to poverty such as social security policies. They identify the different “political contexts” as being reflective of the divergence in their approaches in the extent to which they are willing to engage with lived experience evidence as a consideration in informing social policy development. The different political contexts refer to the different ideologies underpinning the policy decisions of the centre-right Conservative UK Government as opposed to the centre-left SNP Scottish Government. The centre-right promotes individualism and a move away from the state being responsible for individuals - the neoliberal approach which underpins many of the harms experienced by participants in in phase one of the study. Whilst the centre-left promotes social democracy - promoting an increase in welfare policies and/or government services. Additionally, within the SNP there may also be a desire to demonstrate difference and performative progressiveness - ‘we do things differently in Scotland’ for a nationalist purpose.

Policy actors described different methods of lived experience being drawn on in policy making between the UK and Scottish contexts. Several mentioned the potential for lived experience to be included in consultation responses, either through development of a response in conjunction with experts by experience, or through the inclusion of narratives of lived experiences from service users curated by policy actors or colleagues. This policy process was the only engagement with lived experience described by policy actors for the UK

Government, further indicating differences in the approaches of the two governments.

Two participants described undertaking lived experience work with funding from the Scottish Government:

A big piece of work that has been ongoing for a while is, I mentioned the dignity principles...Nourish Scotland worked alongside members of the Poverty Truth Commission, so people with lived experience to develop a kind of toolkit of dignity in practice to deliver, like, peer support, training and workshops, all around improving dignity within a community food setting. And that's a strong example of where people with lived experience have shaped something, shaped a piece of work, shaped a tool kit, with Scottish Government funding, that's then informed what other groups have done, and informed the sorts of work that we want to fund, based on what they have said dignity looks like.

-Senior Research Officer, Scottish Government, Glasgow

The Dignity Principles are the outcome of an Independent Working Group on Food Poverty, which considered issues related to food poverty and made recommendations to the Scottish Government in 2016. The principles (Involve in decision-making people with direct experience; Recognise the social value of food; Provide opportunities to contribute; Leave people with the power to choose) were accepted by Scottish Government and a commitment was made to place “dignity” at the centre of design and delivery of responses to food insecurity (Scottish Government, 2016). This exemplifies a different way of including those with lived experience in the policy development process, at least on the surface, of inviting in accounts of lived experience.

Policy actors generally considered the Scottish Government to be more open to lived experience informing policy making than the UK Government with several examples provided in relation to poverty. A particular strength highlighted by policy actors was the social security experience panel for at the very least creating a clear mechanism for individuals with lived experience of social security payments to feed into the delivery of these in the future. However, concerns were raised regarding the extent to which engagement with lived

experience remains tokenistic rather than impactful in terms of direct changes to policies.

7.2.2 Policy actors' engagement with men's accounts of food insecurity

Policy actors were shown slides with images and quotations from single men who had experienced food insecurity, generated in phase one of this study (all slides shown to policy actors are available in Appendix L). Their responses to these and their thoughts on how they - and similar - types of evidence could be drawn on in the policy context are explored in this section.

7.2.2.1 Reacting to men's lived experience

The policy actors interviewed predominantly worked on issues surrounding poverty or food insecurity. This background often led to them expressing familiarity with the narratives and photographs that were shown, and their responses reflected their sympathy with the men's accounts, particularly in relation to experiences of the social security system.

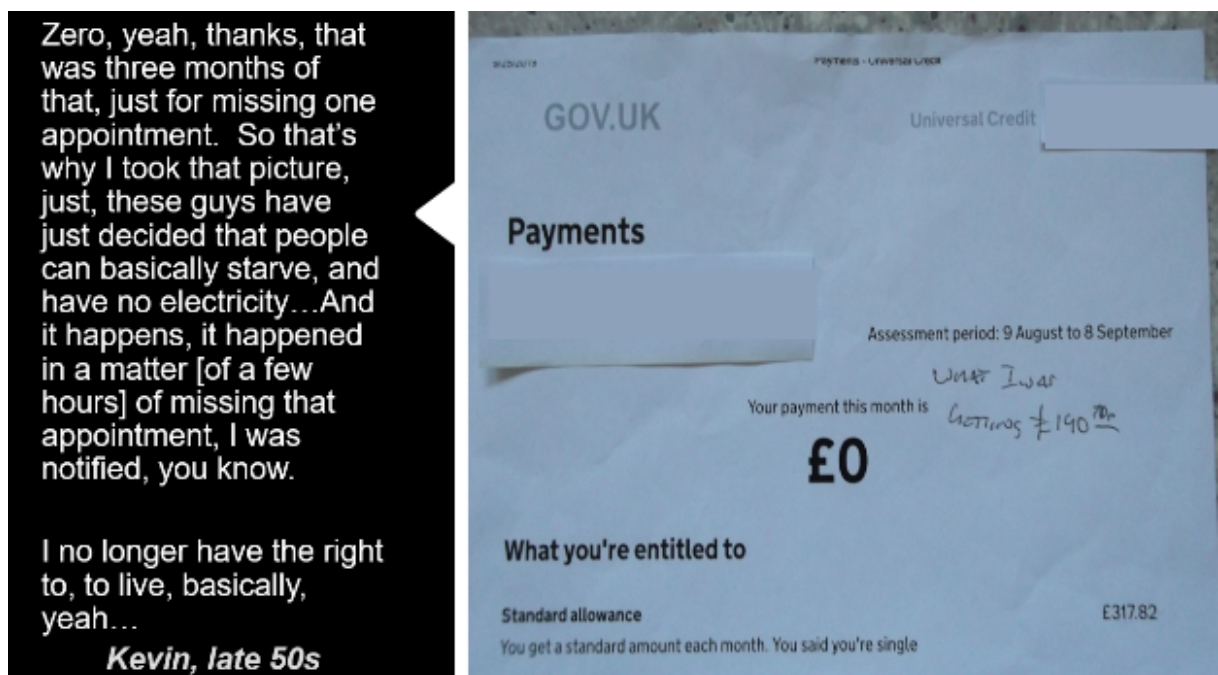


Figure 7-1: Lived experience data shared with policy actors

One policy actor reacted particularly strongly when shown the above graphic:

Oh my goodness. Oh, that's awful, ugh. It's very powerful but it's seen as, you know, like, a gov.uk letter with zero and, you know, like, obviously, Kevin's words at the side in terms of, you know, his experience of how he got to this in terms of missing that appointment. Ooh, it makes me feel quite sick.

- Councillor, Local Authority, Aberdeen

The image and quotation were described as powerful, with the policy actor vocalising a visceral reaction in terms of feeling sick as a result. The lived experience data presented men's engagement with the social security system was generally considered by policy actors to be impactful, with the words "powerful" and "impactful" occurring often. However, despite being powerful, the experience represented did not come as a shock to many of the participants:

I suppose that's quite a powerful quote and photo. But again it's not surprising. We know the links between poverty and mental health and also aware of things like the five week wait for UC, for example, to go back to that.

- Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

This indicates a level of familiarity with both the sanctioning and the distress it caused, this familiarity was shared across most of the policy actors interviewed. Powerful but not surprising was the dominant response from policy actors, particularly those in the third sector. In responding to the lived experience data from single men, the policy actors frequently described their perceptions of the systems and the harms resultant from them - this will be described below.

7.2.2.2 Reflecting on lived experience data: harm and vulnerability

In viewing the data generated in phase one of this study, policy actors frequently expressed familiarity with the accounts, and some surprise that they had been shared by single men. The men's accounts were reflected on by policy actors to support their wider understandings of the social security system and its harms. The prospect of distress as a consequence of engaging with the social security system was described:

You know, if you can experience that or if you can experience the social

security system and emerge with your mental wellbeing intact then you're probably quite fortunate. Because I think too many of the policies that are associated with our social security system almost seem designed to cause hardship and to impact your mental wellbeing.

-Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

This policy actor perceived that engaging with the social security system often led to harm, particularly psychological harm. Reflecting on the policy context of the social security system, he alludes to what in Chapter Five is termed “structural violence” - with the system perceived as “almost seem designed” to have negative outcomes on financial and physical circumstances as well as mental health. The inevitability of this distress was something several participants reflected on. In response to an image and quotation describing suicidality a policy actor replied:

I hate to say it but there's almost, I think, a logical conclusion. You know, what I was kind of describing about how a person's image or their identity being, kind of, removed if they lose their job, or worse, or all kinds of things that affect it but then, you know, folk just don't necessarily then see a way out, or a way to change how they think about themselves...I think it's very powerful, this, because, you know, this person's, kind of, making themselves very vulnerable by exposing this about themselves. You know, I think for some men of that age that would be, like, a really difficult thing to own up to.

-Councillor, Local Authority, Aberdeen

Policy actors recognised the violence portrayed in the narratives and photographs of men with lived experience of food insecurity. This is indicated by the suggestion that suicidality is the “logical” conclusion of going through the social security system, and the associated needs deprivation (discussed in Chapter Five). Additionally, the Councillor reflected on the impact of the data being increased due to expectations of gender. The use of “making themselves very vulnerable” and “for some men of that age” reflects on the dominant narrative that men tend to be less emotionally expressive than women, masking their vulnerabilities. This policy actor suggest that the photograph and quote is powerful as a result of the vulnerability it shows from a man. This may indicate that gender can be influential in the perceptions of lived experience and provide support for the potential of lived experience data from negatively constructed groups in positively influencing perceptions.

7.2.2.3 The role of images of lived experience in influencing policy action

Participants were asked if they were aware of any instances of particular images influencing policy development. Two of the nine participants described the role of images in making changes to the provision of school meals for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. State schools must provide free school meals to eligible pupils, with eligibility dependent on whether a parent or carer is in receipt of specified income-related benefits, including UC. During the closure of schools to help manage the spread of COVID-19, these free meals were still to be provided. In January 2021, parents/guardians began posting images of the food they were being given, supposed to represent £30 of food for 10 days but containing small quantities of food, far below the specified value. As more of these pictures emerged, some were shared by footballer Marcus Rashford, which brought the issue very much into the public's consciousness including being picked up by media outlets (Brown, 2021). Policy actors reflected on the impact of images being shared in a high-profile manner:

On a national scale...the stuff that Marcus Rashford's done, it shows you how actually you can change policy round about access to covering the cost of free school meals during holiday periods. So, I think some of it has to be done on a very kind of high level to have some impact.
-Development Officer, Third Sector, Aberdeen

Policy actor: Because it was tweeted by Marcus Rashford and so many people saw it, it was the first time that I think that really people at scale began to think about what does it actually mean not to give people choice over what they're buying for their children, and that had impact on the policy immediately, didn't it, so...not in terms of the choices, but in terms...at least people got vouchers, didn't they?

Interviewer: What role do you think the images played in...?

Policy actor: They can play a tremendous role, but only if they're in the right hands, or not necessarily in the right hands, in the hands that will mean more people will see them.
-Third Sector, Co-ordinator, London

The policy actors seemed to suggest that the reaction to the food being provided, encouraged through the images evidencing the poor quality and quantity of food, contributed to a change in policy. Initially Department of Education guidance promoted a “food parcel” first approach to replace free school meals for children, however the guidance was changed to suggest schools had the “freedom to decide on the best approach for their pupils”, allowing settings to choose between lunch parcels, local vouchers, and the government’s national voucher scheme, which was relaunched in January 2021. The high profile of Marcus Rashford allowed for the photographs to reach a wide audience, thus encouraging others to share their own photographs and contributing to a sense of “shared experience”. The combination of the content of the images and the volume of them, contributed to a change in policy, thought to be due to the strength of public “backlash”. In this way, the images contributed to the change of policy by providing “evidence” from the public, generated and shared by citizens and bolstered through high-profile social media accounts, which then created pressure for the government. This is a contemporaneous example of the potential for visual representations of lived experience to have traction in policy making processes, particularly where they are generated by citizens and shared widely and may be informative for the potential application of images in influencing policy in the future.

Policy actors were asked what role they thought images of lived experience may have, if any, in policy making. Whilst policy actors had struggled to identify previous examples of images being used to influence policy outside of social media pressure, there was a general consensus that photographs, and other images, could have a role to play in policy making. The potential role of images in policy action will be outlined, with three key domains identified by policy actors: that they are a good way of encouraging expression of lived experience from people and are not dependent on literacy; there are many places where images could be incorporated but currently are not; images were also seen as more memorable, and to better convey some information than words or text.

Several of the interviewees mentioned the compatibility of photography and other visual medias in encouraging expression of lived experience of social issues, for example:

So, I'm kind of keen on whether it's multimedia or whether it's specific pieces of work, photographs and a whole range of things that could actually be used, rather than it doesn't have to be all articulated verbally. For a lot of people with experience of poverty, it's often difficult for them to verbalise it, and certainly to stand up and declare it.

-Development Officer, Third Sector, Aberdeen

As I say, it's sometimes very difficult for people to work up the courage and the ability to reveal themselves for personal reasons to people they've never known. Particularly [to] politicians, maybe at a parliamentary committee, but if you can make a film or photographs and get quotes from people I think that can be a really powerful way of getting their lived experience across to the people that need to hear it.

-Chair/Senior Policy Advisor, Public Body and Third Sector, Edinburgh

Photographs and other multimedia were seen as useful tools in facilitating engagement of people with lived experience in policy making processes. With a reduction in the need to vocalise their experiences, there may be improved access to contributing lived experience to policy. Individuals who do not feel confident or comfortable talking, either related to language, literacy, or stigma, may find sharing photographs or other visual media as a more acceptable method of sharing their experiences. In this way, stakeholders suggested, visual methods might represent an opportunity to remove barriers to engagement in policy making processes for some people. and sum up in relation to facilitating citizens engagement, removing barriers to sharing lived experience.

Participants also suggested a range of additional ways of incorporating images into policy making, with potential for impact, which are currently under exploited.

I'm probably at the wrong end of my career to be learning new lessons but the more I think about it, you know, how we've used it in public campaigns, but why not - in evidence, you know, and much more so in getting across. I mean I think it's done in reports, but I think it could be done more in evidence to committees or to individual MSPs or ministers, the power of the message. So, I think if you're able to link the image to the problem or to the solution it is a powerful tool.

-Chair/Senior Policy Advisor, Public Body and Third Sector, Edinburgh

They reflected on having not previously considered sharing visual media as evidence to policy makers such as MSPs or ministers. This was indicated by the suggestion that they were “learning new lessons”. This indicates a potential role for images in the policy making process, with them considered to powerfully represent the lived experience of various policies and decisions.

While all policy actors interviewed articulated the importance of drawing on lived experience, in some form, in policy making processes, there was concern expressed related to the potential for repeated exposure to accounts of lived experience leading to lessening impact.

The nought pounds is really powerful...it's all a different way of actually presenting lived experience. Because that's part of the issues around lived experience is, you know, it can appear as just a...hardship stories one after another sort of thing...I think folk would relate more... that by actually using kind of pictorial evidence, can actually represent the situation much more powerfully
-Development Officer, Third Sector, Aberdeen

This exemplifies a sentiment shared by several of the policy actors; that repeated exposure to narratives of lived experience can result in people becoming numb to the reality of these narratives. Photographs were described as adding something extra, interrupting what could be perceived at times as a repetitive message. This has the implication that photographs, or other visual media, would need to be used infrequently in order to avoid them also becoming repetitive and perhaps losing some of the power they are repeatedly identified as having. Avoiding ‘lived experience fatigue’ is important to ensure people’s experiences are not viewed as poverty tropes and then ignored, thus demeaning the value of people’s contributions

Visual media was considered a way to encourage policymakers to engage more with what a statistic represents. It was felt that images were more relatable and harder to dismiss, thus prompting the viewer to imagine what the experience is actually like for the various individuals comprised within the number - a reminder that figures describe human beings. A suggestion of images having a role in the policy development processes within briefings written for Members of the Scottish Parliament (MSPs) was made:

If you knew that you were presenting to a cross party group at parliament, for example, I think it could be a really powerful way of getting a message across to them, to combine images as you've done with text and the quotes...you could also think about how to do it within briefings to MSPs...I worked in the parliament for four years as well as a researcher for MSPs so I saw a lot of briefings coming in and I can't think that very many of them had images at all, and if they did they were graphs or bar charts or things of that nature...I think that could be a really good way of doing it....I'm genuinely thinking at the moment, right, the next time I'm due in a parliamentary briefing how can I incorporate an image that might actually effectively get over the message that we're trying to do with a quote. So, yeah, you've introduced an idea in my head that could be quite useful.
 -Chair/Senior Policy Advisor, Public Body and Third Sector, Edinburgh

For almost all policy actors using images of lived experience within existing mechanisms for conveying evidence to decision-makers was not an established practice beyond as illustrations on reports. However, throughout discussions a number of opportunities for incorporating visual content were identified as a means of bolstering the impact of accounts of lived experience, and directing attention to particular issues in briefings, reports and presentations.

7.2.2.4 Contextualisation concerns about incorporating images into policy making

Whilst policy actors were generally positive about the potential role of photographs and other visual media in the policy landscape, they had some reservations. They identified various barriers to increasing incorporation of images of lived experience in policy making processes such as discomfort in engaging with images, the potential for misrepresentation and ethical concerns related to anonymity and othering.

An initial concern which came through when policy actors were responding to data gathered in phase one related to discomfort in engaging with images. Several policy actors indicated they felt they were poor at interpreting images, with an initial reluctance to engage with the images they were shown:

Just skip that one maybe? I'm good with words rather than photos, maybe that's my problem... I'm really bad with photos, you know. I've discovered this about myself. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know what I

think of that, sorry.

-Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

No, no, no, I'm not an image person. [long pause]

-Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London

This could be a potential barrier for the use of images in policy making, as discomfort around engaging with images could result in individuals withdrawing from a topic of discussion. This may be particularly the case when images are presented alone, without a quotation, as a participant who described themselves as not an image person also identified a quotation as being “stronger” with an image:

I think it's stronger with the image. I think you would get what it was just with the words but it's just...yeah, no, it's much...I think it's stronger with the image definitely.

- Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London

Despite suggesting they were not ‘images people’, participants were generally able to engage with images and quotes they were presented with, providing insightful comments and nuanced understanding of the issues being portrayed in images. Participants were generally more comfortable in responding to images of lived experience when quotes contextualising the images were also present:

I'm finding it a bit hard, with these ones that are just photos of food, 'cause it's deciding to know what the context is, and not just to make up what you think is going on, I mean I'm just making up some context. So yeah, I don't feel comfortable making up context, 'cause I don't want to make assumptions, so yeah.

-Senior Research Officer, Scottish Government, Glasgow

The Senior Research Officer described how when images of food were presented they felt they had to make assumptions in order to contextualise them. When photographs were presented in isolation, without text, their meaning was not always clear to participants. This leads to a risk of misinterpretation of an image.

7.2.2.5 Misrepresentation concerns about incorporating images into policy making

The potential for misrepresentation when using images was another concern raised by policy actors for including photographs in the policy making process:

I think there's a big difference between a photo or an image that has been chosen to represent a person by themselves than photos that have been taken and then used in a way that are then not how they were intended, or consent wasn't really informed consent. And, you know, we are using them to justify a point that was never the reason that the photo was taken and that the image was provided
-Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

This highlights the importance of staying true to the original intent of the photograph, and what the image was intended to convey. Without the context of words, it could be easier to misconstrue what an image was intended to represent by the person who created it. For example, using a photograph which an individual conveyed in a positive way to represent something negatively or unsatisfactorily would be a misinterpretation and failing to actually use the photograph to convey the lived experience of the individual who had taken it. This speaks to wider concerns around the deconstruction of meaning and an anxiety about putting out content that is then interpreted in a way that was not the creator's original intention, additional context may help to ensure that the meaning is not lost in this process. Particular concern was raised for the potential of this misrepresentation to contribute to further stigmatisation of those living in poverty:

And there is, there's definitely an issue with imagery associated with poverty...It's not an appropriate representation of what poverty's like in Scotland in 2021. So, there is a real issue with the imagery around poverty. So, I think, to answer your question, when it comes to imagery, I think you do have to be really careful because the experience of poverty that most people have in Scotland, if you were to have an image, would just be like a single parent at the kitchen table looking really stressed. Looking at a bill that's just come in, thinking, how am I going to pay this? Rather than images that we often see that are like the dirty faced children kicking a crappy football around, from 20 years ago. So, I think with imagery you have to be really careful with it that it's done right and that it is properly representative, it doesn't give an inaccurate depiction of what poverty's actually like in 2021.
-Senior Policy & Parliamentary Officer, Third Sector, Glasgow

Without context, old images may be used to misrepresent the current experience. This is particularly concerning where the misrepresentations can contribute to stigma and shame experienced by those living in poverty, such as showing “dirty faced children”. It could be considered that images should have a “use by” date - in the same way contemporaneous survey results are preferred to understand the current circumstances people are living in, it may be important to ensure images being used for evidence in policy are similarly recent unless being used in a longitudinal fashion to map progression on a topic. Concerns around photographers intended meaning, and the depiction of poverty, reflect dilemmas of translation of evidence, making choices on how to curate and present accounts of lived experience.

An added concern around the misrepresentation of current experience relates to how, as previously described in the chapter, images can contribute to public perceptions on an issue. Policy actors felt it was important that images represent issues as they currently stand and do not contribute to a misleading perception by the public. This policy actor conveys a narrow view of how contemporary Scottish poverty should be represented - reflecting a focus on children/families. In this comment, the experiences of those who are not parents are obscured. This perhaps suggests some of the tensions inherent in incorporating evidence based on lived experience into policy making processes - with concern to represent “most people” but in doing so obscuring diversity and intersectionality. Further the prioritisation of those individuals’ experiences who are deemed likely to elicit most sympathy can contribute to further stigmatisation of those excluded.

7.2.2.6 Ethical concerns about incorporating images into policy making

In addition to concerns around representation, policy actors identified further ethical concerns. The issue of anonymity when using photographs was raised by several policy actors:

But people, people in images is complicated, because you have to be so careful showing those in case people are identifiable, don't you, you

know...But the more images there are what's actually happening, the better, but you have to be so careful about that...it shows what's happening in a way that, you know, people need to see that, but not when it's going to impact on the individuals concerned, yeah.

-Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London

This policy actor described ethical concerns particular to the sharing of photographs or videos when individuals are queuing to access food aid. Given the well documented shame and stigma individuals can feel around having to access food aid, sharing images where people are identifiable without their consent may serve to “out” individuals accessing food aid. She expressed that this was of particular concern in the context of image sharing on social media to raise awareness or create public pressure around a topic. Whilst photographs can capture the scale of an issue, for example seeing 50 people standing in a queue in the snow, as is being referred to in this quotation, it is important that this impact is not created at the expense of those who are accessing support. Such considerations convey some of the tensions inherent in the process of advocacy: balancing ethical concerns around the sharing of images with the potential to make impact through emotive and effective communications seems particularly challenging.

Similarly, another participant discussed complex considerations around choosing images to represent food insecurity:

I think when it comes to food insecurity people are sometimes a bit reluctant to use photos of anything other than volunteers at a food bank or food that people are getting that's been packaged up. And really keen not to have anything that was an identifier for people because quite often there was a lot of shame and stigma attached to having to access food provision or some sort of support around about not being able to afford food. The images that we use would be probably a sort of ideal images. Kind of what you're aiming for rather than the reality of what's happening at the moment.

--Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

Policy actors identified that their organisations may be reluctant to use photographs which could be perceived as contributing to shame/stigma, thus were more likely to use images perceived as positive or idealistic. This may serve as a barrier to images of lived experience being used in the policy context if organisations are uncomfortable with images which could be interpreted as reinforcing negative perceptions of an issue. This unwillingness could amount to

visual misrepresentation of those living in poverty. However, several participants in phase one provided images which represented what they would prefer to be able to afford to eat, indicating that “aspirational” photographs may have a place in understanding experiences - such as the gap between what is currently achievable and the ultimate goal. Accurately portraying lived experiences of food insecurity, including through images, without contributing to the stigmatisation of those living in poverty or the erosion of their aspirations, may require careful consideration.

In addition to considering issues with sharing images, particularly on social media, it was identified that the content of images would need to be considered in other settings due to the potential impact of the photographs on those in the room:

I think that it could be hugely triggering for people

-Senior Project Officer, NGO, Edinburgh

This co-ordinator voiced this concern in response to a particular image captured by a single man who had experience of food insecurity.

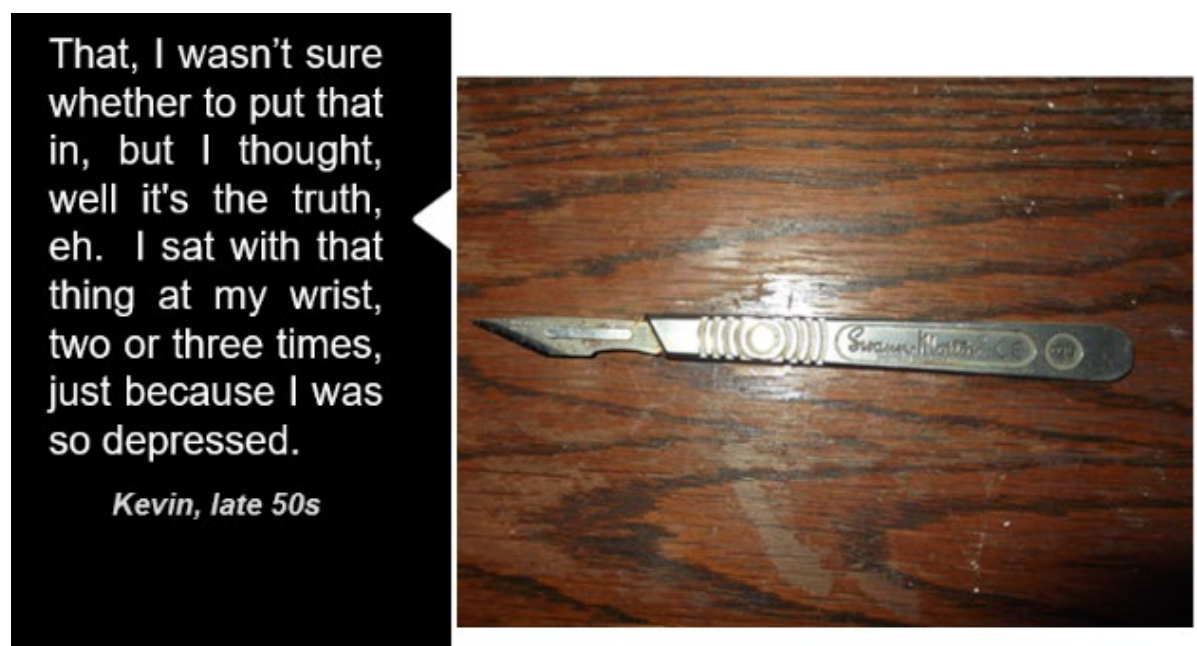


Figure 7-2: Lived experience data shared with policy actors

This highlighted the need to be considerate of the use of photographs in terms of

the effect viewing them may have. It would be an error to assume the lived experience of a policy maker, and so consideration should be given to the photographs used to evidence lived experience on a topic due to the potential harm it may have. However, this needs to be balanced with not censoring the lived experience of people too.

Considerations discussed reflected policy actors concerns with safe guarding individuals, and avoiding contributing to stigmatising discourses, but there emerged tensions in how they could satisfy these concerns alongside effective advocacy efforts. Further tensions were evident in the potential informal cherry-picking of narratives - to represent positive, majority or contemporary experiences, which could be at odds with the range and diversity of lived experiences, and inadvertently contribute to stigmatising or side-lining some accounts (with an emphasis on families, single men's experiences might not appear, despite making up a large proportion of the food insecure population). Whilst there are considerations and tensions in how images of lived experiences can, and should, be used in a policy context, the policy actors interviewed felt images of lived experience could have a role in this area, particularly in terms of being a “powerful” representation of lived experience.

7.2.3 COVID-19: Changes to the policy landscape

Policy actors were asked to consider the impact the COVID-19 pandemic had had on the policy landscape. At the point policy actors were interviewed, it had been ten months since the first lockdown in the UK. On the whole, despite it creating additional work for most of the policy actors, many expressed a sense that the pandemic had resulted in some positive changes in the policy landscape with a general sense that addressing issues of inequality was moving up the policy agenda:

how has the policy landscape changed?... I think we've had increased access to ministers from the [Commission]'s point of view during the pandemic and they've been very...I mean generally most often with the Cabinet section for Communities, she's the Cabinet secretary appointed along with Parliament to the position - we meet once a quarter...you know, very regularly anyway, but during the pandemic we've been meeting much more frequently than that. So, from the [Commission]'s point of view I would say access has improved.

They've wanted to hear what evidence we've been turning up in terms of school meals, Scottish welfare fund, school meal replacement, community food initiatives, et cetera, and they've also wanted to involve us in recovery and renewal planning.
 -Chair/Senior Policy Advisor, Public Body and Third Sector, Edinburgh

This policy actor describes having more frequent direct access to the Cabinet secretary [a Scottish Minister] and suggests the input of his organisation is more actively sought across a variety of different areas. "They've wanted" is indicative of a perceived shift in relationship between the Commission and the Cabinet section - with the Cabinet requesting evidence and being keen to incorporate it in the wake of COVID-19, when before, meeting three times a year is described as "very regularly". This increase in frequency and interest is indicative of a faster paced policy-landscape. Another policy actor echoed this:

I think the policy landscape has become a lot more...it's been forced into a kind of level of reactivism - is that a word? It's been forced to be very reactive. There have been lots of different pots of money popping up from lots of different places and sometimes they're time-limited and decisions need to be made very quickly about where they're going to go. So that forces a level of dynamism to the policy maker
 -Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

COVID-19 lead to a more "reactive" policy environment. Most clearly illustrated in their view by an increase in the availability of funding, as well as faster decisions being made regarding who would receive the funding. This is a consequence of a situation which was both unprecedented and rapidly evolving. However, many of the policy makers spoke positively of this more fast-paced approach. Additionally, she verbalised a sentiment conveyed across the sample of policy actors

I guess the pandemic has just revealed so many inequalities that you would hope that it's propelled people to redress some of the balance.
 -Co-ordinator, Third Sector, Glasgow

The perception that the pandemic had somehow exposed a range of inequalities speaks to the idea that many of the issues faced by people living in poverty were not well known, both by the public and often, by policy makers. Many of the policy actors suggested that they were hopeful that a positive consequence of the pandemic may be increased pressure on various governments to adequately

address issues of poverty and inequality, now that so many more people had been made aware of them.

A concern regarding the policy landscape in the context of covid related to the role of lived experience:

What's happened with COVID is that some really positive progress that had been happening before then in terms of integrating experts by experience into conversations, I think has been impacted. I just think it's not as central as it should be at this moment, because of the fact that COVID has overtaken so many other, you know, it's become...muddied the water in terms of priorities.

-Co-ordinator, Third Sector, London

The speed at which decisions were being made, often out of necessity, prompted concerns from some stakeholders around the integration of lived experience in those decisions. The necessary prioritisation of issues related to COVID-19 may have “muddied the water”. This relates to a focus on acute poverty, with the risk of temporary fixes being applied to deep-rooted issues of inequality, which have not been informed by those with experience of longer-term poverty.

Policy actors perceived a shift in the policy landscape with an increased awareness of inequalities and poverty and a more dynamic policy making approach, however this came with the compromise of reduced incorporation of lived experience in policy decisions. The inclusion of lived experience is generally considered a more time-consuming process, and in the wake of a more dynamic policy landscape, and at a time of increased personal stress, it is likely that “experts by experience” have been excluded from conversations they were previously starting to be included in. This is problematic as it is happening at a time when there was the most impetus for change reflected in more engagement with organisations and more money being made available for organisations working in areas of inequality and poverty. Lived experience evidence, and images, are seen as important inclusions in policy making but given existing tensions in how lived experience is incorporated where time, resources are less stretched, the pandemic may exacerbate these tensions.

7.3 Discussion

This chapter has explored policy actors' experiences and perspectives on the role of lived experience data in policy making, specifically:

3. What are the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the existing and potential role of lived experience in influencing social policy?
4. How do policy actors perceive qualitative data from lived experiences of food insecurity research and how might this data be used to influence policy in this area?

Analysis of policy actors accounts provides insight into how policy actors might draw on accounts of lived experience in advocacy and policy work, alongside the opportunities they identify the areas of potential tension that emerge as they negotiate concerns, particularly in terms of their duty of care and not contributing to the further stigmatisation of individuals.

Policy actors had experience of engaging with lived experience in their work and their discussions of the term were well aligned, with a shared understanding of lived experience as what Borkman (1976) termed 'experiential knowledge' - "truth based on personal experience with a phenomenon" (1976:446). This familiarity with the term reflects the increasing incorporation of accounts of lived experience in policy making to communicate experiences of those often on the outside of society to policy makers (Mitchell, Lange and Moletsane, 2018), ideally enabling a policy to incorporate the needs of those affected by it (Stewart, 2016). For the policy actors in this research, this type of added value was also considered in terms of service delivery - to ensure services were developed in ways which worked for those using them, rather than developed exclusively by those working for them. Policy actors conveyed a general sense of a shared understanding of what lived experience data is and why you would want to incorporate it in to your organisation or within policy.

7.3.1 Familiarity increasing impact

Many of the policy actors, when engaging with lived experience data from men who had experienced food insecurity, indicated a preference towards, or suggested that a statement/image was more powerful, when it represented experiences with which they were familiar. Many of the policy actors worked organisations which could be considered to engage in ‘evidence-based activism’, whereby they collect experiences and build up experiential knowledge for the purposes of advocacy (Rabeharisoa, Moreira and Akrich, 2014). Whilst they may not have had experience of the issue first-hand, they had built up an understanding of the issue through interactions with others with lived experience, and this understanding appeared to facilitate the impact of the lived experience data presented to them. Many of the policy actors interviewed worked for organisations which could be seen as key knowledge brokers, and in doing so they walk a fine line to ensure their message chimes with that of those with lived experience, and appears both legitimate and workable to policy makers (Smith-Merry, 2020).

The tendency to engage more strongly when there is familiarity with the experiences represented may have implications for the extent to which lived experience is perceived as a legitimate form of evidence. In order to maximise the likelihood of lived experience data being impactful in a policy setting, it may be beneficial to facilitate a shared understanding, and thus certain methods of sharing lived experience data may be more appropriate than others. For example, presentations may allow for lived experience to be shared with contextualising information which could improve the understanding of the receiver and thus allow for lived experience to be more impactful. This may be particularly of importance when considering the political contexts raised in section 7.2.1.5 where organisations may be sharing evidence which is critical of policies implemented or supported by those you presenting to. Extra effort in contributing to an environment of shared understanding may facilitate a more positive response from policy actors.

7.3.2 Who is listening?

Lived experience data generated through academic research, may provide a means to communicate the experiences of resource-poor individuals to policy makers (Mitchell, Lange and Moletsane, 2018). Policy actors interviewed were positive about the role of lived experience in influencing policy, however evidence-based policy (EBP) has traditionally ascribed structured processes of validity to evidence which experiential knowledge does not readily fit into. Typically, EBP has considered experiential evidence as valid when it comes from “experts”, for example those with training which allows their knowledge to be classified as “valid”. Smith-Merry (2020) argues that notions of validity in within EBP need to be de-associated with a strict understanding of methods and instead, with validity measured according to the context within which knowledge is gathered and applied. Some of this came through in the interviews with policy actors, who viewed the lived experience evidence as valid, based on it being generated from single men with lived experience of food insecurity. Additionally, there were suggestions of how to incorporate lived experience evidence including images into established evidence calls - for example consultations - to ensure policy makers were made aware of it.

The Scottish Government were perceived as being more open to incorporating lived experience in its decision making. Several policy actors touched on this regarding their perceptions of UK and Scottish Governments. It was broadly felt that the Scottish Government was more receptive of lived experience, with formal processes to enable the sharing of lived experience such as the Social Security Experience Panels formed in 2017. The inclusion of those with lived experience can help policy makers better understand the experiences of those affected by their policies and it can create a sense of robustness in policy processes by demonstrating that they are trying to ensure it is appropriate in the area in which it will be implemented (Meriluoto, 2018). The UK Government was perceived to be much less open to lived experience as evidence. Whilst some examples of lived experience being considered in policy actions, particularly in the context of COVID 19, were discussed, many of the policy actors reflected uncertainty around the extent to which the Scottish Government actually incorporated lived experience in their decision making. It was considered that

these processes may be for appearances; social actions which ‘are done so that they can be seen to have been done’ (Button and Sharrock, 1998, p. 75). If this difference in receptiveness to lived experience is underpinned by the ideology of the different governments, it is perhaps unlikely that the UK Government will become more interested in the value of lived experience for policy making, particularly lived experience evidence which relates to the harms inflicted by their social security policies, whilst a centre-right party remains the majority party. However, it is important to consider that receptiveness may also centre around the question of whether the lived experience evidence being provided is critical, or supportive, of policy decisions and directions. Rather than the UK Government or Scottish Government being the more receptive party, it may be that the policy actors spoken to were generally sharing evidence which fitted the Scottish Government’s political aims.

At the level of organisations such as charities and NGOs, the majority of policy actors felt their organisations tried to facilitate the sharing of knowledge gained from lived experience. This was done both within the organisation when considering things such as service design, as well as the inclusion of those with lived experience in policy discussions outside of the organisation - to include the lived experience voices directly rather than through the voice of a practitioner (Smith-Merry, 2020)- which can bring with it its own benefits and challenges.

7.3.3 Who is talking?

Policy actors identified various considerations in presenting lived experience to influence the policy landscape, particularly when considering ‘experts by experience’. These considerations were similar to those identified by Horner (2016) when looking at public and patient participation in health-care related decision making: whose experience is represented, how is it represented and who does the representation.

Firstly, whose experience is being represented? There are various factors which may shape a person’s ability or willingness to be an expert by experience, with those disempowered perhaps less likely to participate. When considering lived experience in public policy making it is important to consider where the power is

held and the impact this may have on participation. Considerations must be made in terms of the power relations in a room and the potential for othering that can occur when a person is labelled as the one with lived experience (Horner, 2016). The validity of a person's lived experience may come under question when it moves from being their personal truth to something intended to represent the multiple realities of people with a shared experience (Blume, 2016). These factors can lead to some people being left out of these conversations and opportunities perhaps due to feeling underequipped to participate or having concerns about being stigmatised if the topic is one which has been weaponised to being seen as some kind of moral deficit (Scrambler, 2018). On the other side of this, organisations could be seen to be selective of who they engage with, choosing individuals they believe will be more palatable to policy makers. These individuals can become "professional" experts by experience, which can result in a reduction of the validity of their role (Butler *et al.*, 2010). There is a temporal element to this reduction in this validity, which was discussed as a consideration for what is lived experience for many policy makers earlier in the chapter. For example, if an individual has moved out of the experience they are representing (e.g., food insecurity) and are now representing an experience from five years ago, the extent to which their experience is relevant to the current landscape can be questionable. However, if a person is immersed in a group around a topic, for example perhaps they volunteer at a charity for those experiencing food insecurity, then the exposure to a variety of experiences could help them to gain more knowledge and experience, thus helping to improve the ability with which they can represent multiple realities around a topic (Blume, 2016). Consideration of who is being heard when lived experience is being discussed is important to preserving the perceived validity of lived experience as well as ensuring there is not only one 'type' of experience being represented.

Secondly, we need to consider how lived experience is represented. This may have particular importance when considering the use of images in lived experience as within health care, visual media has been found to be particularly influential in informing decision making (Mazanderani *et al.*, 2020). Policy actors had particular concerns around the ways in which images (related to food insecurity) may be misconstrued or may contribute to the phenomenon known as

‘poverty porn’ (Jensen and Tyler, 2015), a genre of visual media which contributes to the stigmatisation of individuals living in poverty. Policy actors perceived that the organisations they worked for would prefer to use ‘positive’ images, rather than more negative images, as a means of creating an image of where they hope to get to rather than the situation as it is now. Ideally those with lived experience should be fully involved in the process of creating and sharing accounts of their lived experience, rather than simply being used as source of an emotive story around their disempowerment (Beresford, 2016). is an important balancing act between sharing the images and stories that those with lived experience wish to share, alongside organisations’ responsibility of care. This research suggests the tensions inherent in these processes - balancing safeguarding of participants and addressing power imbalances, with wider advocacy goals, and strategic approaches to communication (e.g., only using positive images).

Finally, there is the who does the representation. There are a variety of ways for lived experience to enter into the policy landscape. For example, reports from organisations who work with individuals with lived experience, lived experience panels as described earlier in the chapter and academic reports being submitted as evidence to consultation calls to name but a few. There can be a variety of barriers to those with lived experience engaging directly with policy makers and advocacy organisations, this is where additional support can be useful. However, there is a risk that when outside agencies, such as a third sector organisation or academics, relay other people’s experiential knowledge, that they may distort the experience in some way due to their own lived experiences and understandings of a situation. Organisations often have certain aims and objectives, and this may lead to the lived experience of others being misrepresented in a way which fits the narrative of an organisation, directing away from the original meaning of the story or image as intended by the person who provided it. There is also a question of the appropriateness of outside agencies representing lived experiences which perhaps they do not share. Arguably they may be better placed to provide representation of a more diverse range of experiences, thus increasing the perceived validity of their input.

7.3.4 Images as lived experience evidence

Given the potential that evidence based on lived experience can sometimes be considered in ways that expose it to measures of validity developed to support evidence-based policy making that it does not fit with (Smith-Merry, 2020) the incorporation of images, might further exacerbate this tension. The strength of images in illustrating and enhancing qualitative research focused on lived experience is well-established (Harper, 2002; Rose, 2016; Cleland and MacLeod, 2021), but the structured processes through which research evidence influences policy seem unlikely to recognise their validity as such. Policy actors had experience of drawing on lived experience in a policy capacity and, on the whole, were positive about its role. As a group they had little to no experience of using photographs as lived experience evidence. Where photographs had been used, they were often stock photographs to provide a front cover for an output such as a report. Whilst there were potential barriers to utilising photographs, particularly related to exacerbating stigma and issues related to confidentiality, generally the policy actors felt photographs of lived experience, including that generated through research, could have a role to play in policy making - with photographs being perceived as a powerful way to illustrate a point and bring deeper meaning to facts and figures. Policy actors tended to express that the quotations were important to contextualise the images, suggesting that images and quotes work synergistically to convey lived experience.

7.4 Summary

This chapter has considered both the broader question of the role of lived experience in policy making and focused on how policy actors perceived lived experience evidence generated through research with food insecure single men and its utility in influencing policy making and advocacy. There is broad support for the incorporation of lived experience, including images, in policy however there are tensions related to organisational aims and responsibilities, particularly in relation to images.

8 Discussion and conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This chapter synthesises each of the findings chapters to provide a summary and over-arching discussion of the findings in relation to existing literature and the study research questions. The chapter will begin by revisiting the aims and research questions of the thesis, before summarising the findings and exploring these in the context of theoretical and empirical literature. I will move on to discuss the strengths and limitations of this research. The chapter, and the thesis, will conclude with the implications of this work and future opportunities for research.

8.2 The Research Questions

8.2.1 Phase 1 Research Questions

Phase one of this thesis aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland?
 - i) How do single men in Scotland mitigate/cope with food insecurity?
 - ii) How do men describe the impact of being food insecure, and the associated coping mechanisms, on their everyday life?

2. What are single men's perceptions of the causes/drivers of their food insecurity?
 - i) What are the drivers of food insecurity that emerge from men's accounts?

8.2.2 Phase 2 Research Questions

Phase two of this thesis aimed to address the following research questions:

3. What are the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the existing and potential role of lived experience in influencing social policy?
4. How do policy actors perceive qualitative data from lived experiences of food insecurity research and how might this data be used to influence policy in this area?

8.3 Summary of findings

This thesis comprised of two research phases. The first aimed to better understand single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland. The second aimed to understand policy actors' experiences and perspectives on the role of lived experience data, including visual data, on influencing policy making related to poverty. The following section will provide a summary of the findings of these two interlinked studies.

8.3.1 Using a framework of structural violence to understand men's accounts of food insecurity

In Chapter Five, the first findings chapter from phase one was presented which explored 18 single men's experiences of food insecurity and particularly, their perceptions of the drivers of their food insecurity using photo-elicitation interviews, underpinned by a narrative approach. Most men described experiencing food insecurity through a lack of income security explicitly linked to structural factors such as welfare arrangements, living costs, and/or precarious employment. Analysis of accounts, drawing on the concept of structural violence, suggests men framed food insecurity as the result of destitution perpetrated by the state. This framing supports a shift away from

thinking of food insecurity as an issue solely of nutrition to one of poverty, or failure of the state to provide citizens with adequate support.

The preceding decade, 2010 to 2020, has been described as the “most hostile environment for social policy” (Farnsworth and Irving, 2020, p. 76), with a “hardening” (Jensen and Tyler, 2015, p. 484) of welfare policy in the Welfare Reform Act (2012). The most significant change introduced was a whole new system, universal credit (UC). Commonly, the introduction of UC was devastating for participants, with the social security system described as a significant site of harm. This is in keeping with other work in the UK which has found the heightened sanctioning, payment delays and mandatory wait to receive first payment associated with UC has prevented people from meeting basic needs such as food and shelter (Prayogo *et al.*, 2018; Lambie-Mumford and Loopstra, 2020). Participants described feeling distrustful and frustrated with the systems in place. Their accounts aligned with the concept of structural violence which they experienced through interaction with the social security system and their ultimate acceptance of their lack of agency in changing their situation.

Participants, both those currently in paid employment and those not currently employed, described precarious and/or low paid employment as a feature of their working lives. These experiences were linked by participants to their food insecurity. Participants described the interaction of employment with the social security system, whereby participants experienced harm when re-entering the labour market for both short and longer time periods. Job trials were described as site of harm for participants, where benefits were affected without an improvement in financial circumstances. Only one participant expressed the belief that their future would be more financially secure, with the majority resigned to food insecurity as a permanent state.

Participants described different methods of mitigating their food insecurity, one of which was to seek support from charitable organisations. Such organisations can be described as operating under a dichotomy as they both help to relieve some of the harm experienced at the individual level, but in doing so contribute to hiding the ways in which systems perpetuate harm. At the more individual level, support could be precarious, with participants having to “consent” to

levels of surveillance they were uncomfortable with in order to receive support, and their “worthiness” of support being decided by individuals. Some men perceived themselves as, and felt they were perceived as less worthy of support by nature of their gender. They perceived that as men they should just get on with it and leave the support for women and children.

Men described multiple coalescing harms in their accounts. Many discussed being unable to heat their homes, to the point that participants had been concerned about their ability to survive during particularly cold spells. Eating was no longer a source of enjoyment, and participants described eating foods they considered to be very low quality to consume a barely sufficient calorific intake. Through exploring participants’ experiences of financial insecurity, the stark deprivation of adult men’s needs was highlighted, and the violence inherent in the system of social security, the labour market and accessing support was vocalised, with the ways in which men coped with their food insecurity at times resulting in feelings of powerlessness, and sometimes reframed by individuals as evidence of their resilience.

8.3.2 Food insecurity as biographical disruption in the lives of single men

Chapter Six explored the men’s accounts drawing on Bury’s (1982) conceptualisation of biographical disruption as a framework for exploring the experiences of food insecurity. This findings chapter contributes to our understanding of single men’s experiences and perceptions of food insecurity and the ways in which they mitigate or cope with it. Biographical disruption was applied to single men’s experiences of food insecurity in order better understand how single men in Scotland mitigate food insecurity, and the impact of being food insecure on their everyday life. Three core components of biographical disruption were examined: the disruption of taken for granted assumptions; the disruption of explanatory systems; and the mobilisation of resources. Participants experienced the elements of biographical disruption due to experiences associated with their food insecurity. These impacted their everyday life through affecting their ability to engage in standard cooking

practices, loss of food choice and transforming food from something to be enjoyed, to something that must be consumed for survival. Additionally, it impacted some participants through disruption of their explanatory systems, with aspects of their identity being affected - both in terms of being lost or being reinforced as a consequence of being food insecure and associated experiences. Participants described mitigating food insecurity through the mobilisation of including community resources and support of friends and family. Participants also drew on their own skills and knowledge to cope with their food insecurity. For many participants, food insecurity was not the only potentially disruptive event in their life, however biographical disruption provided a framework through which to shed light on these experiences of single men, which often are “residing in [...] shadows” (Timmermans, 2013, p. 3).

8.3.3 Accounts of lived experience of food insecurity as evidence for policy making

In Chapter Seven, the experiences and perspectives of policy actors on the role of lived experience in the policy landscape and their perspectives on data from the lived experiences of food insecurity influencing policy in this area were explored. Through virtual semi-structured interviews, with photo-elicitation elements, nine policy actors were asked about their experiences and perspectives on the role of lived experience in the policy landscape.

Generally, there was a shared understanding of what the term lived experience meant between the policy actors interviewed, with the underpinning understanding of involving individuals who had experience on a topic to try and promote better outcomes when making or influencing decisions which affect that group. Incorporating insights from lived experience into policy discussion was often perceived as a responsibility that organisations have, whereby they are representatives of those experiencing an issue. This could be interpreted as people with lived experience being considered useful for understanding an issue, but not being not being allowed to be part of the solutions.

Policy actors were acutely aware of their duty of care to those whose experiences they sought to learn from, which could at times act as a barrier to their involvement, with policy actors concerned about the potential othering that could arise from sharing their lived experience. There was a tendency for policy actors to try and describe what was appropriate lived experience - in terms of what would be perceived as valid by outsiders but doing this in a way which did not invalidate the experiences of those who did not meet the criteria for “appropriate lived experience”. Criteria such as the recency of the experience was a core component of what policy actors perceived as appropriate.

The importance of context, particularly when using images of lived experience, was identified. The policy actors found the narratives and imagery presented to be most useful when an image and a quote were presented together, with the quote providing context for the image. Images alone were not considered useful. Policy actors often perceived themselves as being unable to use visual data, before articulating insights related to the image. Policy actors struggled to identify previous examples of images being used in the policy making process. Nevertheless, several suggested they did not think that this meant they could not be used, and that this may be a good strategy to draw attention to a particular policy area. Concerns were raised around ensuring images were not misconstrued and stayed true to the original intention of the person who took the photograph, that individuals’ anonymity was protected and that the impact of photographs on those they were shown to was considered ahead of time. Policy actors found the images of lived experience, when accompanied by words, to be an impactful way of conveying the lived experience of policy decisions.

8.4 Overarching discussion of findings

8.4.1 Politically driven food insecurity

Several of the men interviewed identified the political cause of their food insecurity with some making direct references to the political context. The

policies which resulted in the harms described by participants are driven by a neoliberal narrative which has prevailed in society, characterising poverty as a personal failing (Jo, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Baumberg, 2016; Garthwaite, 2016b), whilst, using the same neoliberal narrative to blame individuals for being unable to meet their basic needs, rather than as the intended consequence of unjust policies.

Most men framed the harms they face as directly resultant from inadequate systems and processes of state support. The drivers participants identified, frequently as the main cause of food insecurity, were in-keeping with those found in other studies: the conditionality associated with the social security system (Loopstra *et al.*, 2018; Reeves and Loopstra, 2020) and the impact of the introduction of UC (Cheetham *et al.*, 2019; Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019). An additional driver identified in participants narratives was the interaction of the social security system and precarious employment and employment practices. Practices such as job trials left them exposed to harms due to the monthly assessment within Universal Credit not accounting for irregular employment. Young (2020) found the monthly assessment to be a challenge to income stability, leading to different payments each month. This payment volatility, in the accounts of single men, contributes to their food insecurity.

Neoliberal narratives contributed to the individual level stigma participants experienced, employing coping strategies at the individual level but ultimately aware there was little they could do to substantively change their food security levels. Awareness of inadequate systems causing or exacerbating food insecurity has been raised within the food insecurity literature (Cheetham *et al.*, 2019; Reeves and Loopstra, 2020; Beck and Gwilym, 2022), with changes as a result of austerity identified as a contributor throughout Europe (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). Given the limited ability to do more than attempt to mitigate the symptoms of food insecurity at the individual level when the causes are often at the macro level, questions must be raised around the extent to which food insecurity is a continuation of the complexities related to poverty which will be explored later in this chapter.

I have argued that these social policies constitute structural violence, whereby processes and institutions cause harm to people by preventing them from being able to meet their basic need. As was outlined in Chapter Five, experiences of food insecurity have previously been understood as structural violence. (Whittle *et al.*, 2015; Johnson, Drew and Auerswald, 2019; Booth and Pollard, 2020; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022). Food and welfare services have been identified as a setting through which structural violence is enacted and experienced, with similar experiences of surveillance and judgement to those described by participants in phase one (Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022). These interactions exacerbate harm experienced by participants, in terms of restricting their access to support and by contributing to feelings of shame and stigma dominant in individuals experiencing food insecurity and poverty more generally (Jo, 2013; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Baumberg, 2016; Garthwaite, 2016b). Nevertheless, I suggest the distal cause of these harms lies further upstream, at the social policy level. This is in keeping with Whittle *et al.* (2015) who hypothesise that housing policy and disability policy rendered people living with HIV/AIDs as food insecure. Building on previous UK work conceptualising experiences of poverty as resultant from structural violence, and the links made in international work between food insecurity and the framework of structural violence, this study is one of the first to explore accounts of lived experience of food insecurity in the UK using this lens.

It is suggested that those who experience harm from structures and processes (structural violence) may experience social disintegration (freezing/boiling). Within the sample of single men I interviewed, freezing was the dominant experience described by participants, with a sense of powerlessness and lack of agency often woven through their narratives. Feelings of powerlessness and hopelessness, have been described in other work which seeks to understand the experiences of food insecurity (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Meza *et al.*, 2019), and may contribute to feelings of social isolation (2.6.4) and increased apathy in the face of seeing little prospect of change in their living circumstances, with individual attempts to mobilise resources (section 6.2.6) unable to address the root causes of their poverty. From the interviews, there was a real sense of

weariness - particularly in relation to the effects of being unable to afford utilities (see section 5.4.2) - that seemed to contribute to men freezing, both literally and figuratively, rather than boiling.

Food insecurity, or food in the context of poverty, can provide a vehicle for shared understanding of the causes and consequences of poverty, the structural violence enacted by the state and perpetuated in various processes and services (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2014; Muderedzi *et al.*, 2017; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020). Participants were asked to share their experiences of food insecurity and provided narratives related to food specifically, but also to a lack of income, to feeling socially isolated and to feeling punished by political choices. The experiences shared by participants were recognised as familiar by policy actors, particularly those working in the third sector, and many felt the narratives and images shared were evidence they could use in policy setting. Food insecurity is often a symptom of poverty, and that poverty is driven by political choices (Jenkins *et al.*, 2021). The harm experienced by these political choices can be exacerbated at the more micro level through interactions with formalised and informal support, with interactions to receive food aid sometimes proving problematic for participants. These types of interactions contributed to the experience of food insecurity affecting how participants see themselves (Chapter Six), contributing to the disrupted sense of self some participant described experiencing.

8.4.2 Lived experience evidence influencing policy

With policy decisions frequently underpinning experiences of food insecurity, policy solutions are required reduce food insecurity. Policy actors interviewed expressed that lived experience data, including images, had potential applications in the policy making process.

Policy makers do not just make policy based on evidence, other individual level and institutional level factors may influence them (Cairney and Oliver, 2017). This relates to why certain issues gain political attention while others do not. Kingdon's (1995) policy streams model indicates that to make it on to the policy agenda there must be an identifiable problem, an identifiable policy solution

and the appropriate circumstances for the solutions to be implemented, and that any policy solution should be feasible and acceptable. The extent to which an issue can be described as a problem is socially constructed - societal values and/or social norms can change, leading to issues becoming a problem despite them previously being considered acceptable (Dorey, 2005). Dorey (2005) provides the example of the British law only problematising domestic abuse in the early 1990s. It became a policy issue only once society deemed it unacceptable. Photographs, or other visual media, are a means for policy actors to advocate for those who are suffering in a more impactful way. Using lived experience research for advocacy may serve to help make food insecurity of populations who are not “positively constructed” at least visible, contributing to the first requirement in Kingdon’s model of an “identifiable problem”. The potential impact that making a problem visible can have, in terms of contributing to a policy change, was described by policy actors when reflecting on the impact that circulation of images of child meal provision had during COVID-19 lockdown.

The social construction of target populations (those likely to be affected by policy) can influence policy formulation, particularly in relation to those perceived as “deserving” or “undeserving”, with perceptions of those who will be affected influencing the popularity of a policy proposal (Schneider and Ingram, 1993). Policy makers aims to receive support from populations perceived as ‘deserving’ (positively constructed), with these constructions rooted in conscious bias. These constructions are ‘strategically manipulated for political gain...to create political opportunities and avoid political risks’ (Schneider and Ingram, 1997, p. 192). This has been demonstrated earlier in the thesis when describing the discourse that has been used to describe welfare recipients. Using impactful images and narratives to advocate for groups who are not necessarily perceived as requiring support, or are not constructed positively, may contribute to changing how they are constructed, thus increasing public appetite for policy solutions which benefit these groups.

Lived experience data, including images of lived experience, were described by policy actors as impactful and powerful. There is scope to use lived experience

evidence in an advocacy capacity through which to challenge dominant neoliberal narratives of deservingness.

8.4.3 Masculinity and experiences of food insecurity

Phase one of this research focussed on the experiences of single men, following their identification as a key group impacted by food insecurity. All of the men interviewed were single, they either did not have or did not live with a partner, and for the vast majority it was the case that they did not have a partner. The existing literature surrounding food insecurity identifies the importance of familial and friendship networks for support when people are experiencing food insecurity (Dowler, Turner and Dobson, 2001; Garthwaite, 2015) with work looking at income security suggesting single people need the most support (Young, 2022).

There has been a policy focus on families in relation to food insecurity, this is seen in the only direct food aid from the state being child focused (Barker and Russell, 2020), with little policy focus on the experiences outside of a family setting. Single men are a demographic which can be considered as negatively constructed (Schneider and Ingram, 1993), with their gender being part of this construction. Within their accounts, notions of gender identity were alluded to, particularly when discussing accessing support. Experiences of support through familial and friendship networks were mixed amongst participants. As described in Chapter Five, turning to friends and community networks for support was a relatively useful way of “mobilising resources” in the face of their food insecurity. In keeping with findings from Dowler *et al* (2003) these networks provided both emotional and financial support to those experiencing food insecurity, such as giving money for food. For those who had this type of support, it was often a source of harm reduction, in that it helped individuals to meet their basic needs. However, several men outlined not having, or being unwilling to access this type of support. However, there were some men who did not access interpersonal support, avoiding telling friends and family about their hardship due to how they felt they were perceived by these networks. Men who self-identified as usually being the provider or the “fixer” in their networks, were unwilling to be cast in another role. The role of provider has been

identified as important in the development of masculine identity (Brown, 2016) and it is possible that notions of masculinity are tied into their unwillingness to relinquish being perceived in this manner. Another way through which masculinity seemed to interact with accessing support related to how they were perceived by more formal support provisions, this will be explored below

For several of the men, the end of relationships had financial consequences such as moving accommodation, and for at least two men it had contributed to homelessness. Becoming single acted as disruptive event for participants, particularly in relation to accessing housing and food support. Participants described feeling as though their gender contributed to them being given lower priority than women. In housing this manifested in long waiting times to access temporary accommodation, whilst in terms of food aid it manifested in feeling as though their need was questioned or deprioritised. Participants perceived this as being because they were viewed as less vulnerable. In this way the construction of their gender roles and identities in their accounts (single men, less vulnerable) can be seen to impact on the ability of some men to access and receive support, with those who either do not have, or who are unable to access familial and friend networks, left particularly vulnerable in his regard. Gender was briefly reflected on in the interviews with policy actors, with the images and narratives shared considered particularly impactful due to perceiving disclosure as more difficult for men. The public acknowledgement of having an issue has been described as challenging for me due to the perception that “men don’t express their emotional and social needs in public” (Johal, Shelupanov and Norman, 2012, p. 23). Disclosure being considered particularly difficult, due to gender norms, appeared to increase the impact of the lived accounts. Masculinity was interwoven in men’s accounts, particularly in relation to it contributing to barriers in accessing support.

8.5 Segmenting poverty

The extent to which food insecurity is its own issue, versus a component of a wider issue is an area in which my thinking has developed over the course of this PhD. At the outset of this thesis, I believed food insecurity to be a unique

phenomenon, worthy of exploration, related as it is to a fundamental need, however over time this viewpoint has developed. Whilst I still believe that food insecurity is an experience which requires and deserves exploration and attention, particularly in light of it being an inability to realise a Human Right and a fundamental need (section 1.2), the evidence in this thesis has demonstrated additional value in the use of food insecurity as a lens through which we might understand more about systemic social injustice. It is an experience which can be used to evidence the effects of neoliberal ideology. However, by discussing food insecurity independently, we can contribute to segmentation of poverty, a sense that food insecurity occurs on its own. Certainly, within my sample in phase one food insecurity did not occur in a vacuum, participants described experiences which could be described fuel poverty, transport poverty and digital exclusion. These deprivations are all symptomatic of the same underlying issue, as simply put by Chakraborty (2021) - “the problem is poverty, no matter which label we give it.”

Food insecurity can be viewed as fitting in with wider notions of relative poverty (Lambie-Mumford, 2017), as it can be considered as a ‘dynamic process rather than a fixed state’ (Lister, 2004, p. 157). It allows for understanding that individuals move up and down the spectrum of severity or can move into being food secure. However, only one man interviewed described beginning to move into food security, with all others conveying an expectation that their situation was likely to remain the same. This speaks to the notion of biographical flow (Faircloth *et al.*, 2004) presented in Chapter Six, by which people understand their circumstances as the logical extension of previous experience, thus expecting what has been true previously to continue. The likelihood is that with the cost of living rising, their ability to access and afford food will have decreased.

Most of the men interviewed were experiencing poverty, with food being one area of a number of material deprivations. I believe it is appropriate to consider food insecurity most often as “food within the context of poverty” - utilising aspects of our understanding of food insecurity to appreciate that whilst there are significant similarities across experiences, it is not a homogenised experience.

8.6 Strengths and Limitations

This research has explored single men's experiences of food insecurity, and policy actors' perspectives on lived experience evidence in this area. The sampling strategy aimed to engage a range of men from food banks and beyond, with most participants recruited from outside a food bank setting. This research managed to engage a group who do not usually take part in research (Ryan *et al.*, 2019) and is one of very few studies which has qualitatively explored men's experiences of food insecurity, particularly in a high-income country context.

8.6.1 Phase one

Given the population of interest, recruitment was quite challenging. Despite initial efforts to recruit across Scotland participants all come from, or close to, large urban settings. The majority of participants came from within the city bounds of Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow - these cities represent the three most populous cities in Scotland. The one exception to this lived within driving distance of Glasgow, close to a smaller urban centre. The urban experience of food insecurity is likely different to that of more rural food insecurity and given 21% of the Scottish population lives in remote or rural settings, a more complete understanding of food insecurity for single men in Scotland would have been achieved through recruitment from more rural settings. The majority of men interviewed had experienced moderate to severe food insecurity. As discussed in Chapter One, food insecurity is a spectrum ranging from mild to severe. Much of the existing literature, and study one, is weighted towards those at the more moderate to severe end. This leads to an incomplete picture of food insecurity in Scotland, with a lack of understanding of experiences at the less severe end of the food insecurity spectrum.

In phase one, the vast majority of participants were white men, with only one participant who described themselves as non-white (due to concerns around his safety it was agreed not to disclose his specific ethnic group). Information on the sexuality of participants was not collected, although the majority of participants

who mentioned previous relationships described heterosexual ones, so this study was unable to provide insight into the role sexuality and race may play in terms of the experience of food insecurity in this study.

This study was explorative, seeking to understand the depth of experiences of food insecurity in Scotland by single men. By using photo elicitation men were able to share what was important to them in the context of their everyday experiences of food insecurity, contributing an additional layer of insight to their experiences of food insecurity. Photo-elicitation has not frequently been used within research in men with it more frequently being used amongst young-people and women (Oliffe and Bottorff, 2007) When discussing my work, I was often met with questions similar to “Do you really think men will want to talk to you about that?” or “Do you really think that men will want to take photographs?” and a strength of this study is that it shows that at least some men, do want to share their experiences - both verbally and visually - and photo-elicitation provided a means to move away from perceived cultural norms such as a lack of disclosure.

8.6.2 Phase two

In phase two, almost all policy actors were based in Scotland, with only one participant based in England. This sample limitation does not allow for an understanding of experiences and perspectives of lived experience in policy in different areas of the UK. Given several participants discussed their perceptions of the differences between the UK Government and Scottish Government, it would be beneficial for future work to involve participants who were able to speak to that, or absence of that, by experience rather than by perception. The majority of policy actors interviewed worked in the third sector, or had third sector experience, which may influence how they experience and perceive the role of lived experience evidence in policy, with them perhaps more open to the inclusion of lived experience. However, given the policy actors role in the third sector it has allowed for insight in how data from lived experience research, particularly from phase one of this study, may be applied in an

advocacy setting.

Phase two consisted of semi-structured interviews with photo-elicitation elements. In this phase, I selected the images and quotes presented to policy actors for the photo elicitation. This introduces a level of curation, whereby the images and quotes they responded to were selected by myself for them to discuss, based on my own assessment of which were more “suitable” in representing the experiences described by men in phase one. Future work could benefit from a more participatory approach, with men involved in the decision making of what data is used with policy actors. A strength of the study is the experiences and perspectives provided by individuals working at different levels of the policy making process. Study two utilised virtual interviews, which allowed increased access to participants, than an in person one. This increased access to participants and contributed to experiences and perceptions from those based within a range of organisations such as non-food related third sector, food related third sector, local authority, and government. Phase two allowed for a novel application of photo-elicitation, with narratives and images generated in previous research, used to stimulate conversation in a different population of interest. This is a strength of phase two, as it allowed for the direct sharing of the lived experience of men experiencing food insecurity, in order to understand how lived experience research could be utilised in a policy setting.

8.7 Future Research

Given the paucity of research on men's experiences and the rich accounts gathered in this study which illuminate experiences of food insecurity, further empirical research in this area could enhance our understandings of the challenges faced by this key group (Perry *et al.*, 2014; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017; Sosenko *et al.*, 2019; Bramley *et al.*, 2021) particularly in the context of a bleak social and economic outlook (HC/HL Deb, 2022; Hourston, 2022).

Future research should consider food insecurity in more rural areas in Scotland. As described earlier in this chapter, the rural experience will likely be significantly different to the urban experience, with the coping strategies many

participants in this research referred to reliant on local access to food support, the experiences of those in more rural and remote settings is likely to require different strategies.

A more gendered approach to food insecurity may be useful in future research, with the potential to undertake gender comparative work. Whilst lots of work has been undertaken looking at food insecurity in the context of women, particularly that of mothers (Tarasuk, 2001; Olson, 2005; Power, 2005; Ivers and Cullen, 2011; Martin and Lippert, 2012; Power *et al.*, 2018; Pineau *et al.*, 2021; Power and Small, 2021) there is relatively little work done which understands the experiences of men. Men's experiences of food insecurity are not yet widely discussed, yet it seems they are experiencing significant structural violence in policy terms, with hegemonic masculinity discourses potentially limiting the extent to which they are viewed as in need (Shildrick and MacDonald, 2013). Whilst it is well understood that more women experience food insecurity and poverty than men, there is a lack of work which understands the experiences of men who are experiencing food insecurity and poverty, and a more gendered approach to food insecurity may be useful moving forward.

Research which is more intersectional in terms of the inclusion of LGBTQIA+ individuals and the experiences of different ethnicities, given the importance of food in cultural practices, would be a useful area of future research. All but one of the participants in my sample were white and from the UK, however my participant from Central Asia described particularly strong feelings of a loss of identity (section 6.2.4.1), suggesting that there may be culturally important differences in the experience of food insecurity. Such work has been undertaken in women (Power *et al.*, 2018), exploring the experiences of food insecurity amongst white women and Pakistani women, and could help to inform the development of more inclusive services and policies.

Many of the qualitative explorations of the experience of food insecurity have focused on accessing individuals through food banks (Garthwaite, 2014; van der Horst, Pascucci and Bol, 2014; Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Jensen and Tyler, 2015; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017), this study attempted to move beyond this singular approach to recruitment with the aim of accessing a wider range of

experiences of food insecurity, including those who might choose to avoid the potentially stigmatising experience of attending a food bank. As detailed in Chapter Three, some of those recruited outside the food bank setting offered accounts of their experience which differed in a range of ways to those of participants accessed through local food banks. However, despite this very few of the participants could be described as experiencing “less severe” food insecurity. An exploration of those experiencing more mild food insecurity, estimated to be about 6% of the population in the UK Family Resources Survey (DWP, 2021), may have a host of potential applications; understanding factors which prevent individuals experiencing mild food insecurity from moving to more severe food insecurity could be beneficial in mitigating harm.

Comparative work in relation to the role of lived experience evidence in social policy issues between different governments may be a useful future direction of research. This could look at different Governments in the devolved sense as well as a comparing public practice internationally. This may enable an exploration of the ways in which to use lived experience evidence most impactfully with the goal to influence policy, learning from best practice across different Governments. An additional future direction of work could be to interview more policy actors from outside the third sector - for example speaking to more individuals who work in national and local government to better understand the potential for lived experience evidence to impact on policy making.

8.8 Implications of the research

This research has raised a number of issues that have implications for practice and policy. These will be discussed below.

8.8.1 Short-term priorities

Across the interviews, men shared various accounts of where services designed to provide essential support, were inadequate in meeting their needs. In part this relates to the disaggregation of poverty, and the focus on food insecurity as an experience in isolation that requires only food aid to mitigate harms. Men's accounts featuring descriptions of harrowing fuel poverty highlight the

importance of considering this coalescence of conditions of poverty within food aid services. In these cases, for support services which are providing food there needs to be options for those who do not have access to gas or electricity. At least far back as 2014 some food banks have been providing kettle-only food parcels or cold-boxes (Butler, 2014). These are food parcels which contain foods you can make using only the kettle - for example instant noodles and instant potato or boxes which do not require any heating to consume such as tinned rice pudding, crackers, and corned beef. This is even more important in the context of the cost-of-living crisis where ever more individuals will be left unable to afford to turn on their ovens or cookers. Consultation with nutritionists or dieticians to make these boxes as nutritionally balanced as possible is a necessity as even with “normal” food packages, the nutrient quality has been found to be inadequate (Simmet *et al.*, 2017). This is particularly important in the context of those managing long term conditions, where individuals are likely to be experiencing multiple harms, as was the case for many participants in phase one.

Participants described difficulties navigating support and being forced to prove their “need” for support, or having support suddenly withdrawn. As ever-increasing numbers of people require assistance in order to feed themselves and their families it is vital that support services address volunteers and staff bias. As Williams *et al* (2016) reminds us, food banks (and I would argue other support services) are political spaces in which beliefs are formed, experienced and acted on, with this particularly true for discourses of deservingness and dependency. Support services have previously been found to be the sites of structural violence, with micro-aggressions occurring within the food support setting (Hodgetts *et al.*, 2014; Bruck and Garthwaite, 2020; Lindberg *et al.*, 2022). This in part seems due to services adopting and enacting neoliberal discourses of people being undeserving or not really in need (May *et al.*, 2020) and for the men in my study, their “need” for support was called in to question, which they felt was often due to the fact they were male and/or did not have children. Those working and volunteering at support providers need to be aware of the damaging perpetuations of stereotypes they enact when assuming a person’s need. Support services could begin to address this by, for example, incorporating

unconscious bias training into their inductions.

8.8.2 Longer-term priorities

The findings from this study provide additional support for a Cash First approach supported by Independent Food Aid Network and Nourish Scotland (IFAN, 2020). This approach prioritises maximising income and helping people to access existing financial entitlements, recognising that whilst support services may deal with the consequences of poverty, cash is required to tackle it at its root. Insufficient income was a common thread in phase one and recognised by the policy actors in phase two as a significant issue. A cash first approach would be useful in helping address this, as well as helping to improve issues identified around food choice and preparation by enabling individuals to obtain food which is most appropriate for their needs. One way of doing this at the policy level would be to incorporate cash benchmarking. A briefing paper from the Social Market Foundation argues that the government (and those engaged in policy development more broadly) should routinely compare policy proposals to the alternative of providing cash transfers of equivalent cost to the proposal (Bhattacharya, 2021). This links to the cash first approach by identifying that cash may be the most efficient way to improve a person's circumstances, as well as allowing for increased dignity and autonomy.

Analysis of men's accounts of food insecurity drawing on the framework of structural violence, provides empirical evidence of the consequences of erosion of adequate social policy in the UK and the increase in inadequate charitable food provision. Based on this, a further implication derived from this research would be the rehabilitation of social safety nets, utilising a Cash First Approach. This was recommended by the Independent Working Group on Food Poverty (Scottish Government, 2016) as the most dignified response to an acute income crisis which would enable people to buy the food they required immediately - however they acknowledge that a one off cash payment will not resolve underlying issues. Work undertaken into income insecurity suggests that the timings of payments are important, with income particularly prone to volatility in low income households (Young, 2022). There are various ways of doing this such

as Universal Basic Income or a Minimum Income Guarantee, but all are underpinned by a Cash First approach. A Universal Basic Income is a scheme in which all people are unconditionally provided with a long-term, regular, and substantial sum of money. The unconditional nature of such a scheme would help to reduce harms associated with benefit sanctioning, assuming the cash payment was adequate to cover subsistence. A scoping review of interventions similar to basic income has indicated that there are mental and physical health benefits to such schemes, with the potential for long term individual and societal improvements (Gibson, Hearty and Craig, 2020). Cash first can be implemented as a change in practice by organisations supporting people experiencing food insecurity. This could be done by providing advice on income maximisation, ensuring full benefit entitlement is being met, or by signposting to services which can do this. Some organisations are already doing this, such as CFINE in the North East of Scotland which has a SAFE (Support, Advice, Finance and Education) Team inhouse, which aims to improve household income.

Related to the findings outlined above highlighting the inadequacy of contemporary UK social policy, men articulated clearly the drivers of their food insecurity and coalescing conditions of poverty most often as situated in the social security system. The study then adds more evidence to support review of the processes and involved in accessing, and maintaining access, to UC, alongside existing work (Cheetham *et al.*, 2019; Thompson, Jitendra and Rabindrakumar, 2019; Reeves and Loopstra, 2020) which finds that waiting times and sanctions embedded in the process of UC contribute to food insecurity. Despite assertions from government that such policies encourage individuals back into work, there is evidence to support the opposite (Welfare Conditionality Project, 2018). Recent refusal from the DWP to publish internal research on the effectiveness of sanctions further calls into question the benefits of such sanctions (Butler, 2022). Welfare conditionality needs to be recalibrated, with a move away from the punitive system currently in place which contributes to individuals experiencing exceptionally poor living standards. There should be a removal of the mandatory waiting period after an application for UC, which for many participants in phase contributed to building debt, exacerbating their hardship. The coalescence of conditions of poverty such as the likelihood of ill health, poor living conditions, lack of support (especially for those single, living

alone) mean the labour of securing UC without the imposition of sanctions contributes to a huge burden. Sanctioning is punitive and entirely inappropriate given the accounts presented in this study which highlight clear instances of needs deprivation resultant from this punitive system. The failure to understand the difficulties individuals may have in attending appointments - for example as a result of health, or lack of access/affordability of transport - results in harm and an inability to access basic needs. I suggest that a policy change to remove or reduce the sanctioning periods individuals experience because of non-attendance is an implication of the findings of this work.

Evaluation and improvements to UC are particularly urgent in light of the increased cost of living. Individuals experiencing food insecurity are often held hostage by policies and practices which result in being made to pay more, for being unable to pay, and this is particularly evident in the case of direct debit versus pre-payment meters. The justness of forcing individuals without sufficient financial means to pay increased rates is something which requires urgent review. Whilst local food responses help to alleviate the hunger associated with food insecurity, cannot address the root causes of it. What is required is social and economic policies which prevent, rather than embed, poverty and destitution. Ensuring individuals can meet their basic needs should be the bare minimum of social and economic policy and at present we are falling far short, and individuals with the least resource are most affected by this failing. Within this economic policy should be a move away from precarious employment practices. This study adds to the empirical evidence base on lived experience which links precarious employment with food insecurity in the UK (Barker and Russell, 2020; Beatty, Bennett and Hawkins, 2021). The interaction of precarious employment with UC particularly problematic and is another area of UC which requires rebalancing.

Given the case for reforming and renewing the social policy landscape in the UK in relation to UC, and wider measures to address income security, supported by the findings of this study, the findings of phase two support consideration of how this policy landscape might be renewed. Accounts of policy actors indicates support for policy which is developed in the context of understanding lived experience. Mechanisms for engaging with lived experience research and

individuals with lived experience, particularly in relation to groups often less considered in the policy setting - for example those who are culturally remote - would be beneficial the lived experience of those affected by the implementation of policies moving forward. The harms experienced by those who are culturally remote often go unnoticed (Farmer, 2003). Mechanisms to facilitate representations of their experiences in policy making are especially important to ensure inequalities are not entrenched further and across different axes of disadvantage, for example the importance of continuing to consider single men as poverty, in particular child poverty, becomes the focus of policy attention.

8.9 Original contributions

This PhD study is the first to explore the experiences of single men living in Scotland who are experiencing food insecurity. Existing research from the UK (Douglas, Sapko, *et al.*, 2015; Garratt, 2017; Loopstra and Lalor, 2017) identified that single male households are the most common household type that visit Trussell Trust food banks, indicating that single men may be particularly susceptible to food insecurity. This is an under researched area, within the UK, I have only identified one study which has explored food insecurity predominantly amongst men (Haddow, 2021). This work focused on the experiences of individuals frequently accessing food through free food sites such as soup kitchens and the relationship status of these men was not well described. Additionally, this work presents accounts predominantly gained from men recruited from outside of food bank settings. The use of photo-elicitation with adult males, served to challenge dominant perceptions and discourse around men's willingness to disclose more generally (Creighton *et al.*, 2015). Participants in part one of the study generally found photo-elicitation to be a useful way of engaging in research. Further, this allowed for an exploration of policy actors' perceptions on the role of images from lived experience research in the policy process - something which to the author's knowledge has not previously been undertaken, at a time of increasing policy urgency in relation to the rising cost of living.

8.10 Conclusion

This thesis has explored single men's experiences of food insecurity in Scotland and using data collected, explored the current and potential role of lived experience and lived experience research in landscape of policy making. Men described experiences which have been conceptualised in this thesis as food insecurity as a symptom of structural violence. Men were unable to meet their basic needs - particularly around food and adequate shelter - due to policies, particularly social security policies, which cause harm. Additionally, it has explored the extent to which biographical disruption provides a useful framework for understanding food insecurity. The single men living in Scotland employed a variety of mitigation strategies, but many were aware of the limitations of reducing harm at the individual level, when it is caused at the social policy level - this resulted in a hopelessness amongst most participants that their situation was unlikely to improve. Phase two indicates that lived experience research, particularly that which utilises visual methods, may be an impactful way to increase understanding of issues related to poverty, with the potential for it to motivate change, particularly through altering the wider public's perceptions of those experiencing food insecurity. Changes at the structural level could significantly improve the lives of the participants of this study and others living with unmet basic needs. At present, increasing numbers of individuals face being unable to meet their most basic needs due to political decision making - different decisions can and must be made.



Men's thoughts and experiences about accessing and affording food in Scotland

Name of Researcher: Kathryn Machray

Name of Supervisor: Dr Gillian Fergie, Dr Stephanie Chambers. Professor Shona Hilton

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask me if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you or not you wish to take part. Thank you for reading this.

What is the project about?

In recent years there has been interest in how affordable food is and how important it is to people. Food can be important for a whole range of things such as spending time with friends and family as well as for things like health and avoiding hunger.

This project wants to talk to men who are the only adult in their household about food: how do you get it, is it something you think about a lot, do you ever eat with friends/family? I want to find out what men think about their ability to access and afford food and how they feel about this.

What will it involve?

Taking part is voluntary and involves meeting twice. If you decide to take part, I'll meet you to talk about how you access and afford food and the ways in which food is important to you.

Firstly, I'll meet you to ask some questions about your background, so I can get to know you. I'll also ask eight quick yes or no questions about food in the last year so I understand your experiences of affording and accessing food a bit better. This will take no more than 30 minutes.

I'll ask you to take some photos for a few days – up to a week (things like where you get food, or what you do when you run out, what you prefer to eat) you can do this using your own phone or camera, I can give you a camera. Then, we'll meet to talk about the photographs, this takes around an hour. We will ask if it is okay to sound record what you say so we don't miss any of the things you want to say. Interviews will be in person and can be held at a time and place that suits you and the researcher.

Will I benefit from taking part?

By participating you will be contributing towards building a greater understanding of how men experience and cope with accessing and affording food in Scotland. Being interviewed can provide an opportunity to openly talk to someone outside your family and friendship network and this may be positive for you however we cannot promise you will directly benefit from taking part. As this project needs you to give me your time (meeting twice and taking photographs) I'll give you a £20 voucher after we meet for the second time for a supermarket or a multi-shop voucher.

Will anyone know what I have said?

I'll be recording the interview, so I can make sure I've heard you correctly and this means if I quote you, I'll be able to use the same words you used. All your data will be stored in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (2018). This means an ID number will be created for each person participating in the research which will be used to organise their information. The document linking the name of each participant and their ID number will be stored in a password protected computer file which only the researcher will have access to.

What will happen to the information collected?

The interviews will be typed up so that the researcher has a good summary of the views of everyone who takes part. The information will be securely stored on password-protected computers and in locked cabinets for at least 10 years. In the future, other researchers will have to ask the study team for permission if they want to access the information.

The research will form the basis of a PhD thesis, and may also be written up into articles, conference papers or blog posts. A summary of the research will be available to you if you wish to read it. Photos where you, or others, are identifiable will not be used.

I'd like to create an exhibition of photographs at the end of the project. You can participate in the project even if you don't want your photographs included in the exhibition, I'll provide you with a copy of all your photos and if you don't want any of them included in the report or the exhibition you can let me know.

Can I change my mind?




Taking part in this project is your decision, if you don't want to then that's okay. If you want to take part but change your mind about talking about some of the photos you've taken, just let me know. The same goes for anything you say, if you don't want me to use it or you wish to withdraw at any time you can.

To find out more or to take part

If you want to find out more about the project, you can call 0141 357 3949 and ask for Kathryn Machray. You can also contact me through email: k.machray.1@research.gla.ac.uk

This project has been considered and approved by the University of Glasgow College of Medical, Veterinary and Life Sciences Ethics Committee. If you want to talk to someone that isn't related to the study or pursue any complaint you can email Dr Jesse Dawson who is the University College Ethics Officer: Jesse.Dawson@glasgow.ac.uk

Appendix B Phase one consent form

		MRC/CSO Social and Public Health Sciences Unit	
			
			
Participant ID Number:			
Title of Project: Food insecurity among men who live in Scotland			
Name of Researcher(s): Kathryn Machray			
Supervised by: Dr Gillian Fergie, Dr Stephanie Chambers and Professor Shona Hilton			
CONSENT FORM			Please initial box
I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet version 2.0 dated 05/02/2019			<input type="checkbox"/>
I have had the opportunity to think about the information and ask questions, and understand the answers I have been given.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my participation is my decision voluntary and that I can stop at any time without giving any reason			<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that if I withdraw from the study, my data collected up to that point will be retained and used for the remainder of the study.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that the recorded interview will be transcribed word by word and the transcription stored for up to 10 years in University archiving facilities in accordance with Data Protection policies and regulations.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that if I feel unhappy with any question I do not have to answer it			<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree that my name, contact details and data described in the information sheet (photographs and interview data) will be kept for the purposes of this research project.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree for the data I provide to be anonymously archived in the UK data archive and that other researchers can have access to this data only if they have scientific and ethical approval, and agree to preserve the confidentiality of this information as set out in this form.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I understand that my information, photographs and things that I say in an interview may be quoted in reports and articles that are published about the study, used in presentations but my name or anything else that could tell people who I am will not be revealed.			<input type="checkbox"/>
I agree to my photographs being used in an exhibition and other public engagement activities but that my name or anything else that could tell people who I am will not be revealed.			<input type="checkbox"/>
v 2.0 dated 05/02/2019 Study funded by: MVLS Endowment project 130423-08			

I agree to take part in the study.

☐

Please sign only if you agree to participate in this study

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

(1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher)



University of Glasgow | College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Study title: The role of lived experience data in social policy

1. Invitation to participate

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Please ask if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. If you decide to take part in this study, you will be given a copy of this Participant Information Sheet and a blank consent form to keep. Thank for you taking the time to read this.

2. What is the purpose of the study?

The purpose of this research is understand the experiences and perspectives of those who are involved with social policy on the role of lived experience data, including visual data, on influencing policy decisions, both within their organisation and more broadly. In this case, it will focus on data collected from a study exploring single men's experiences of food poverty. The study, comprising of one to one virtual interviews, will take place over a period of 4 months and will contribute towards a PhD thesis.

3. Why have I been invited to participate?

You have been invited to participate based on you or your organisation's role in policy.

4. Do I have to take part?

No, it is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be given this information sheet to keep and be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part, you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

5. What will happen to me if I take part?

Approximately 10 people will be invited to take part in this study, which will be conducted using Microsoft Teams. Involvement is voluntary and includes taking part in an one to one interview over Microsoft Teams with a PhD Researcher.

Firstly, you will be asked to provide informed consent. Following this you will be asked some questions about your job role and your organisation before being asked questions around your experiences and perceptions of using lived experience data in your work. After this, data gathered from a study looking at lived experience will be shown to you, including photographs, to explore your thoughts and perceptions on this.

You will be interviewed once, with interviews expected to take between 30 minutes and an hour. You will then be given the option of having the transcript returned to you to ensure you are happy with the content. The interview will, if consent is given, be audio-recorded using a dictaphone to capture computer audio. Additionally, if consent is given, the interview will be recorded within Teams as a back-up to the Dictaphone. This recording will be destroyed once dictaphone recording is confirmed. Participation is totally voluntary, and participants can choose to withdraw at any time, with no reason required.

6. What do I have to do?

Once you have read this information sheet, please ask the researcher if you have any questions. Then, you need to provide informed consent – this will be done over Microsoft Teams. Then you need to answer questions asked by the researcher (it is totally acceptable to refuse to answer any question for any reason). Then, if you wish, once the transcription is complete you will have an opportunity to look over this.

7. What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?

Other than your kind contribution of around an hour of your time, you should not be disadvantaged in any way by your participation.

8. What are the possible benefits of taking part?

You will receive no direct benefit from taking part in this study. The information that is collected during this study will give us a better understanding of the role of lived experience research on policy related to food insecurity. Additionally, being interviewed can provide a space to reflect on your experiences and perspectives.

9. Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?

All information which is collected about you, or responses that you provide, during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential. You will be identified by an ID number, and any information about you will have your name and address removed so that you cannot be recognised from it. Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of serious harm, or risk of

serious harm, is uncovered. In such cases, the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.

All data in electronic format will be stored on secure password-protected computers. No one outside of the research team or appropriate governance staff will be able to find out your name, or any other information which could identify you.

10. What will happen to my data?

We are collecting your basic personal data such as name, age, gender, email address, contact details and, where relevant, limited special categories data (employment & role within an organisation) in order to contact you on the progress of this research project, invite your comments, and also provide a context to the information you provide to us. We will only collect data that we need in order to achieve this.

All your data will be stored in accordance with General Data Protection Regulation (2018). This means an ID number will be created for each person participating in the research which will be used to organise their information. The document linking the name of each participant and their ID number will be stored in a password protected computer file which only the researcher will have access to.

The information will be securely stored on password-protected computers for at least 10 years.

It is important that we share study data with other genuine researchers and research institutions. To do this, we will archive study data anonymously in the UK data archive, University's Enlighten archive or other approved archiving facilities so that other researchers can have access to this data. Other researchers can access this data only if they have scientific and ethical approval and agree to preserve the confidentiality of this information.

11. What will happen to the results of the research study?

The research will form a chapter of a PhD thesis and may also be written up into articles, conference papers or blog posts. Anonymised direct quotations will be used if consent has been given. A summary of the research will be available to you if you wish to read it.

12. Who is organising and funding the research?

This research is being funded by the College of Medical Veterinary and Life at the University of Glasgow.

13. Who has reviewed the study?

This project has been reviewed by the College of Medical, Veterinary & Life Sciences Ethics Committee.

14. Contact for Further Information

If you want to find out more about the project, you can email me at:
k.machray.1@research.gla.ac.uk.

*If you have any concerns please contact PhD supervisors:
Dr Gillian Fergie gillian.fergie@glasgow.ac.uk or Dr Stephanie Chambers
stephanie.chambers@glasgow.ac.uk*

Thank for you taking the time to read this participant information sheet



University of Glasgow | College of Medical,
Veterinary & Life Sciences

Project Number:

Participant Identification Number for this trial:

Title of Project: The perceived role of lived experience in informing social policy

Name of Researcher(s): Kathryn Machray (PhD student)
Dr Gillian Fergie, Dr Stephanie Chambers, Professor Shona Hilton (Supervisors)

CONSENT FORM

Please
initial box

I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet version 2.0 dated 10/12/2020

☐

I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice version 1.0 dated 10/12/2020

☐

I have had the opportunity to think about the information and ask questions and understand the answers I have been given.

☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected.

☐

I confirm that I agree to the way my data will be collected and processed and that data will be stored for up to 10 years in University archiving facilities in accordance with relevant Data Protection policies and regulations.

☐

I understand that all data and information I provide will be kept confidential and will be seen only by study researchers and regulators whose job it is to check the work of researchers.

☐

I agree that my name, contact details and data described in the information sheet will be kept for the purposes of this research project.

☐

I understand that if I withdraw from the study, my data collected up to that point will be retained and used for the remainder of the study.

☐

I agree to my interview being audio-recorded by dictaphone

☐

I agree to using Microsoft Teams to record the interview

☐

I understand that the recorded interview will be transcribed word by word by and the transcription stored for up to 10 years in University archiving facilities in accordance with Data Protection policies and regulations.

☐

I understand that my information and things that I say in an interview may be quoted in reports and articles that are published about the study, but my name or anything else that could tell people who I am will not be revealed.

☐

I agree for the data I provide to be anonymously archived in the UK data archive or other approved archiving facilities, and that other researchers can have access to this data only if they have scientific and ethical approval, and agree to preserve the confidentiality of this information as set out in this form.

☐

I agree to take part in the study.

☐

Name of participant

Date

Signature

Name of Person taking consent
(if different from researcher)

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

(1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher)

Have you struggled to afford enough food or the food you want to eat?

We want to hear from **men who do not have/live with a partner**, who in the last 12 months have **worried about not being able to afford enough food or the food they'd like to eat**.

Taking part involves talking to a researcher twice. You will receive a **£20 voucher for your time**.

Find out more online: <http://bit.ly/foodinsecuritystudy>

Or phone or text researcher Kathryn Machray:



Background Information**1. Date of birth/Age****2. Postcode****3. Accommodation type (Ownership, privately rented etc)****3.a Living with children?****4. Single/partner lives elsewhere****5. Employment/Education****6. Food Insecurity Experience Scale Questions**

During the last 12 months, was there a time when, because of lack of money or other resources:

1. You were worried you would not have enough food to eat? Yes/No
2. You were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food? Yes/No
3. You ate only a few kinds of foods? Yes/No
4. You had to skip a meal? Yes/No
5. You ate less than you thought you should? Yes/No
6. Your household ran out of food? Yes/No
7. You were hungry but did not eat? Yes/No
8. You went without eating for a whole day? Yes/ No

Taking Photographs: a quick guide

For the next week, you'll either use your phone or be given a camera to take pictures of things that mean something to you, or sum up how you feel about accessing and affording food. This could be objects, people, places - you are in charge.

If you're using your phone I'll provide you with a number to whatsapp me the photographs as you go and we can look at these in the interview. If I'm providing you with a camera please take the photographs on this. I'll come back to visit you in the week after you've been taking photographs and we can chat about some of your photographs. A reminder that it's entirely up to you if you want to take part.

Some Quick Rules about Taking Photographs

- 1.If you are taking a photograph inside, remember to put the flash on. I'll show you how to do this when you are given the camera.
- 2.Remember that you might be asked to talk about any photograph you take so they should be of things you feel okay talking about
- 3.If you are taking photographs of other people, please do not include their faces or any identifying features. You should also make sure they're happy to be included in your photographs.

What should I take pictures of?

I do not know what accessing and affording food means to you so you have control over what you take photographs of.

If you need some inspiration, you could try some of these ideas:

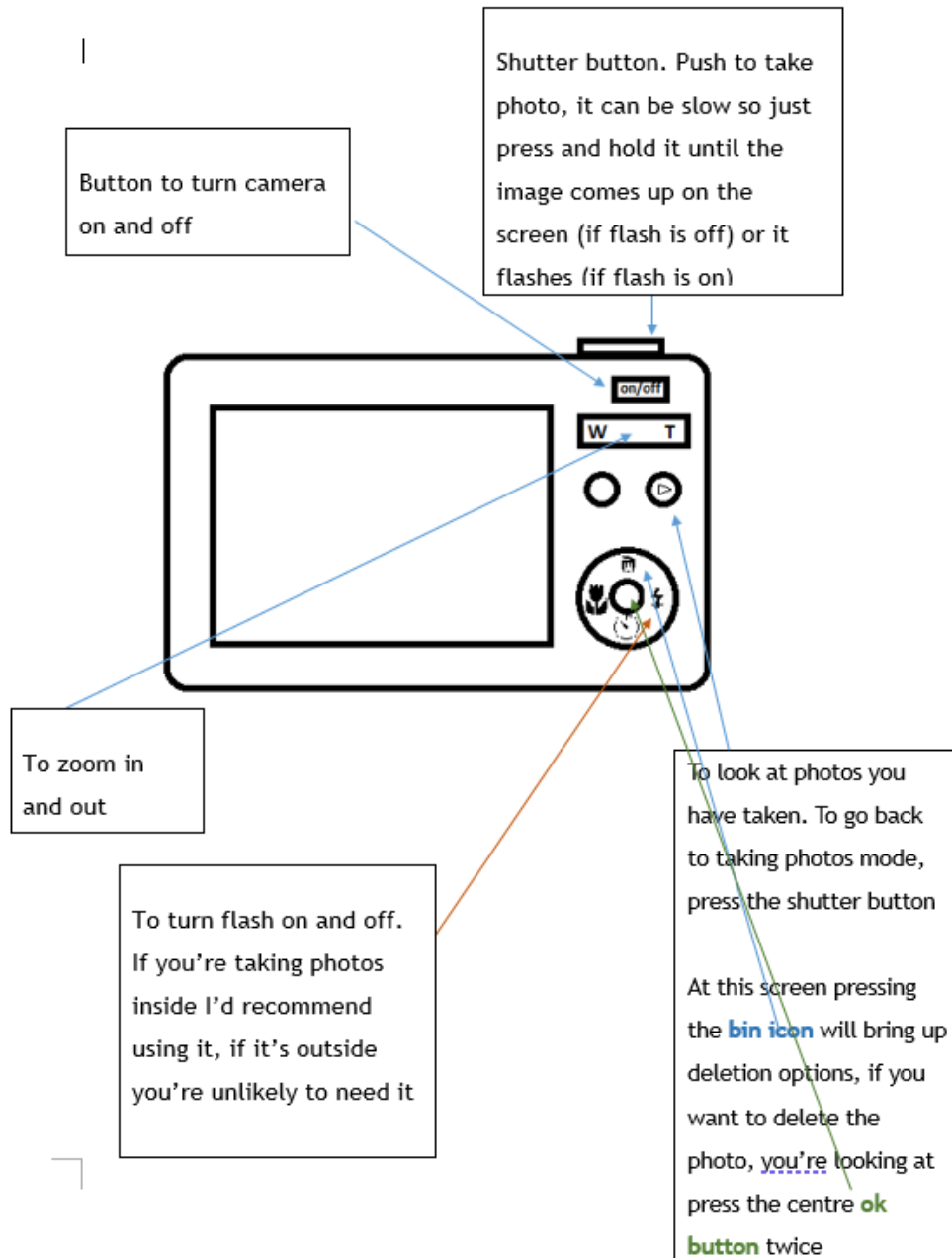
- Where/how do you get food
- Social eating – eating with others/eating on your own
- Foods that make you feel a certain way
- hat does food/cooking/eating look like in your home?

We'll talk about up to 15 of your photographs, feel free to take more or less photos than this if you want and you can decide which ones you want to talk about in the interview

What happens next?

I'll take your photographs back to my office and print out copies for you and myself. Your copy will be sent to you so you have a reminder of the photographs you gave me and can withdraw any of them at any time. I'll keep my copy of them in a safe, locked drawer. In the future, I may use your photographs in reports or in talks I give to people interested in accessing and affording food. They may also be used in an exhibition related to accessing and affording food. If you don't want your photographs used in this way, let me know!

Basic How-To Guide for taking pictures with the Fujifilm Camera



Topic Guide – Interview

Photo-elicitation interviews should be driven by the participant and so prompts are more useful than specific questions.

Useful Prompts

- Tell me about the story of your food insecurity
- Tell me about food in your life,
- What happened that made you take X photo?
- Can you tell me more about that?
- What does looking at this photo make you think of?

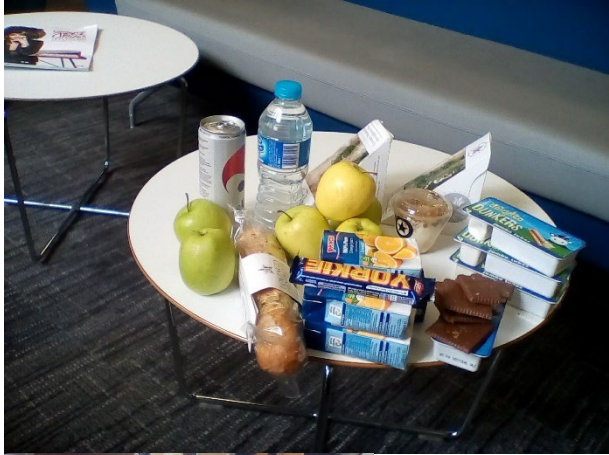
To finish: Is there anything you'd like to tell me about how you access and afford food that you haven't mentioned so far?

Appendix J Participant photographs



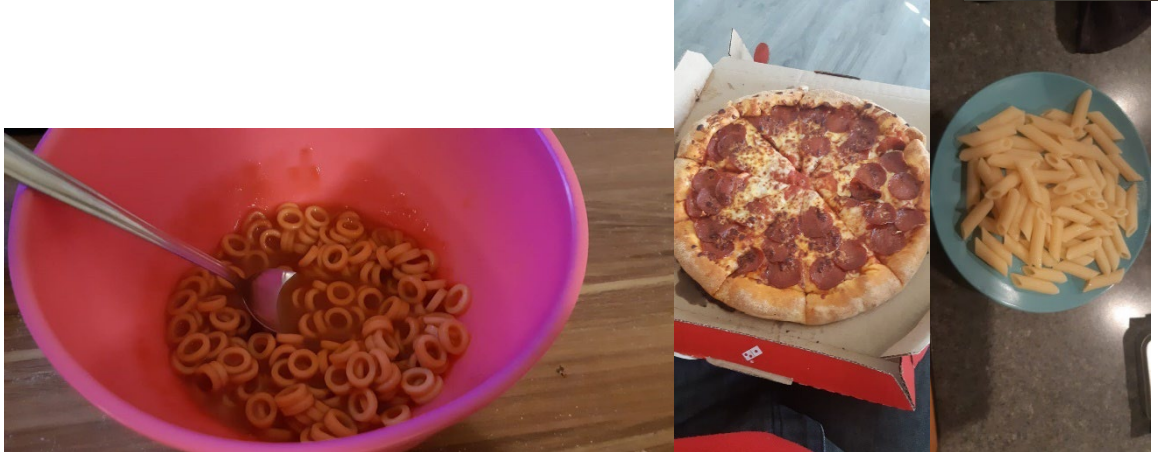






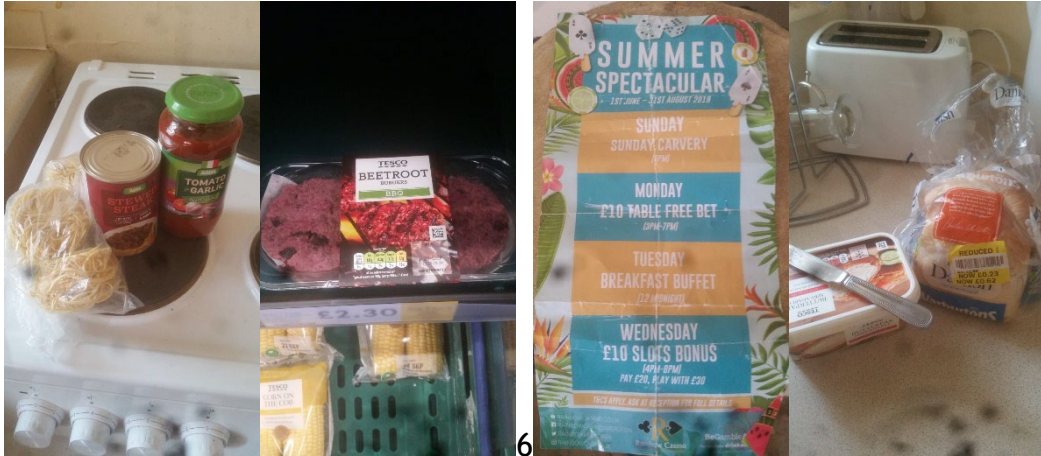




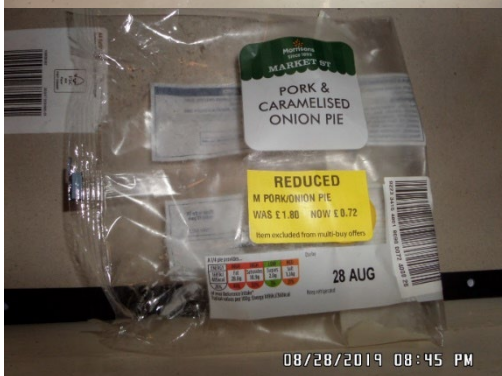




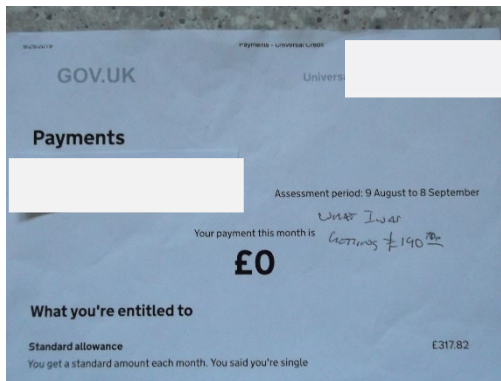
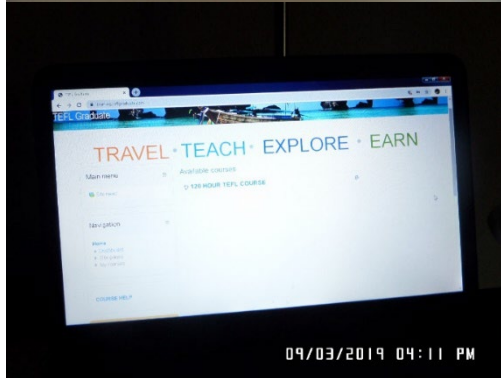










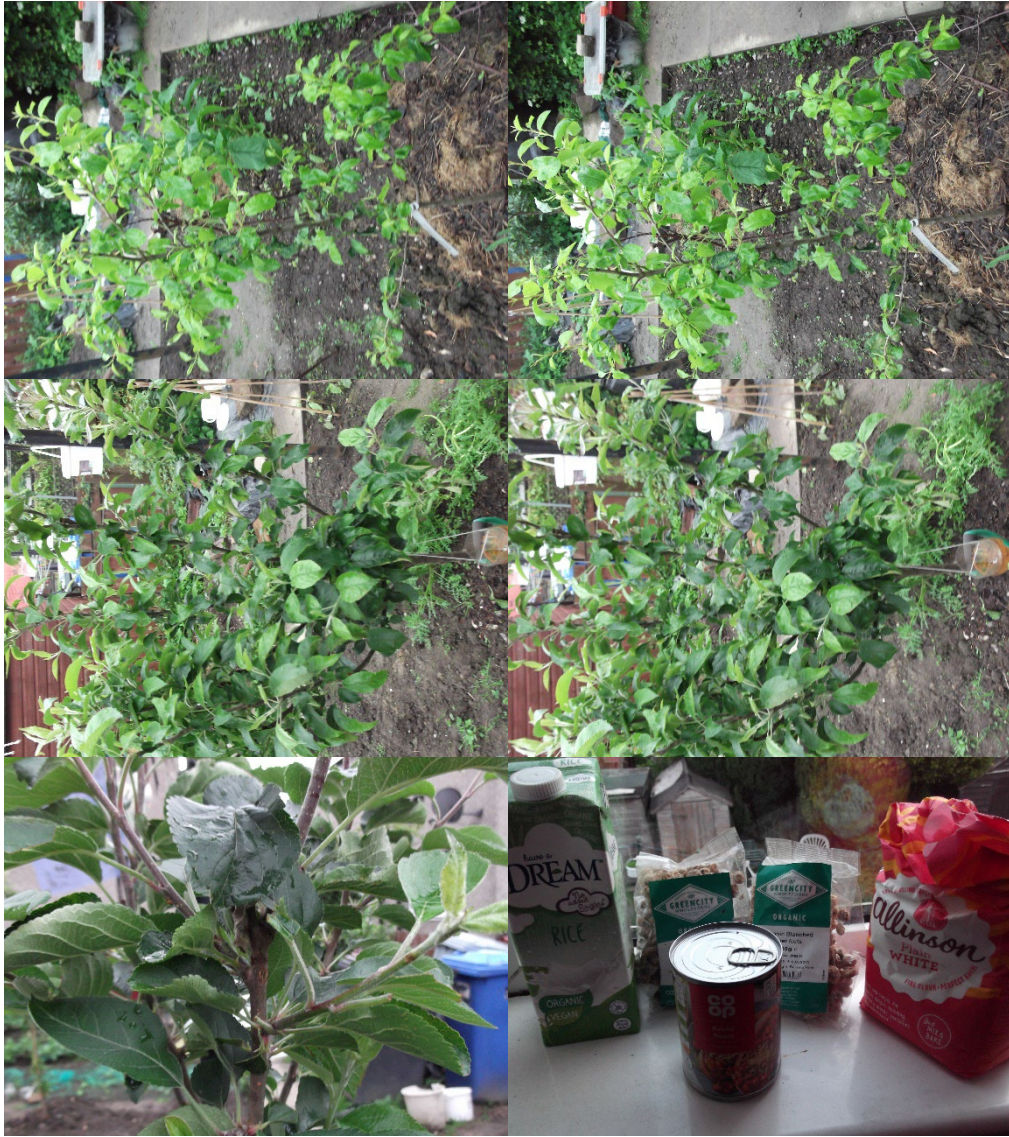


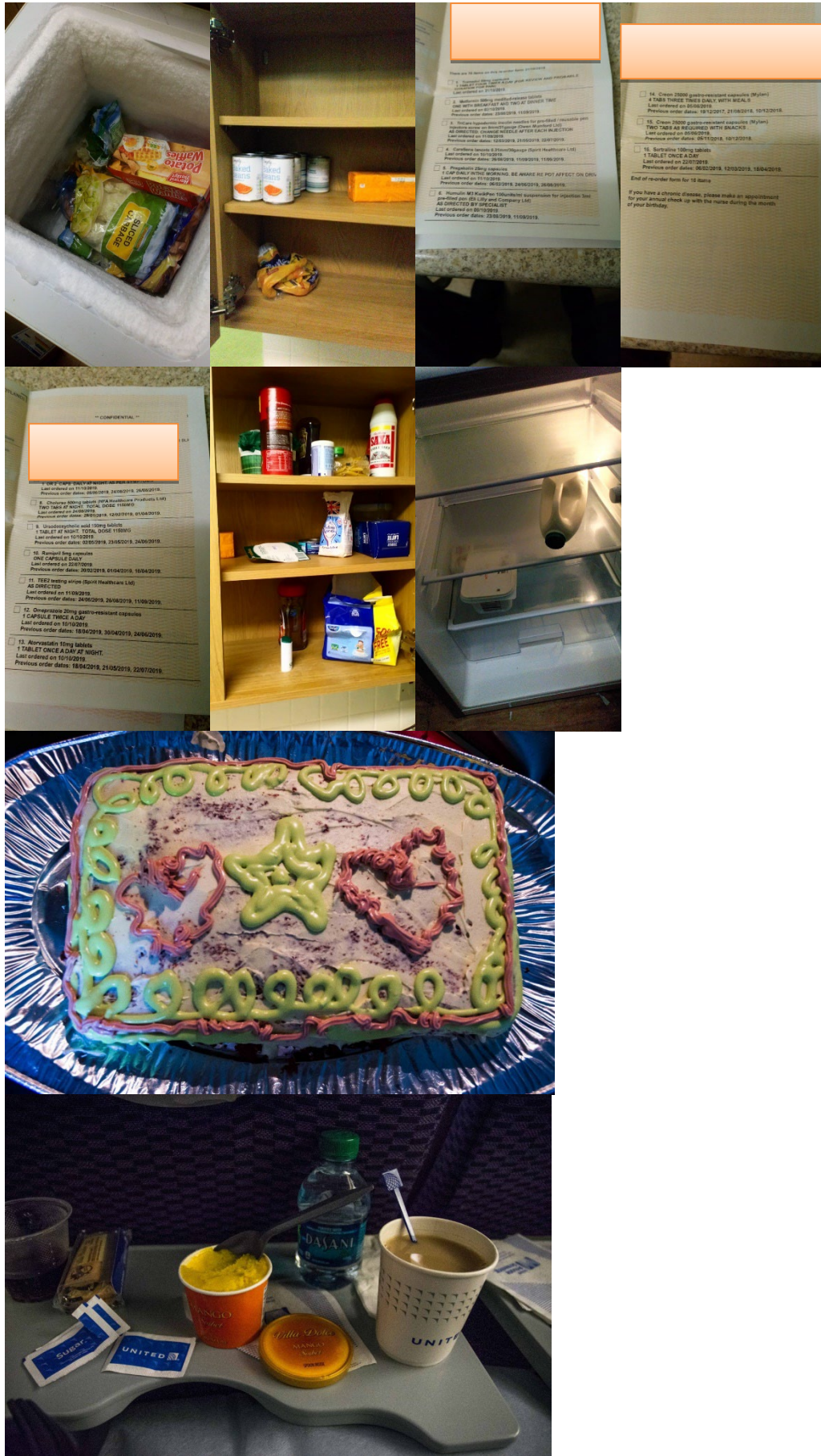


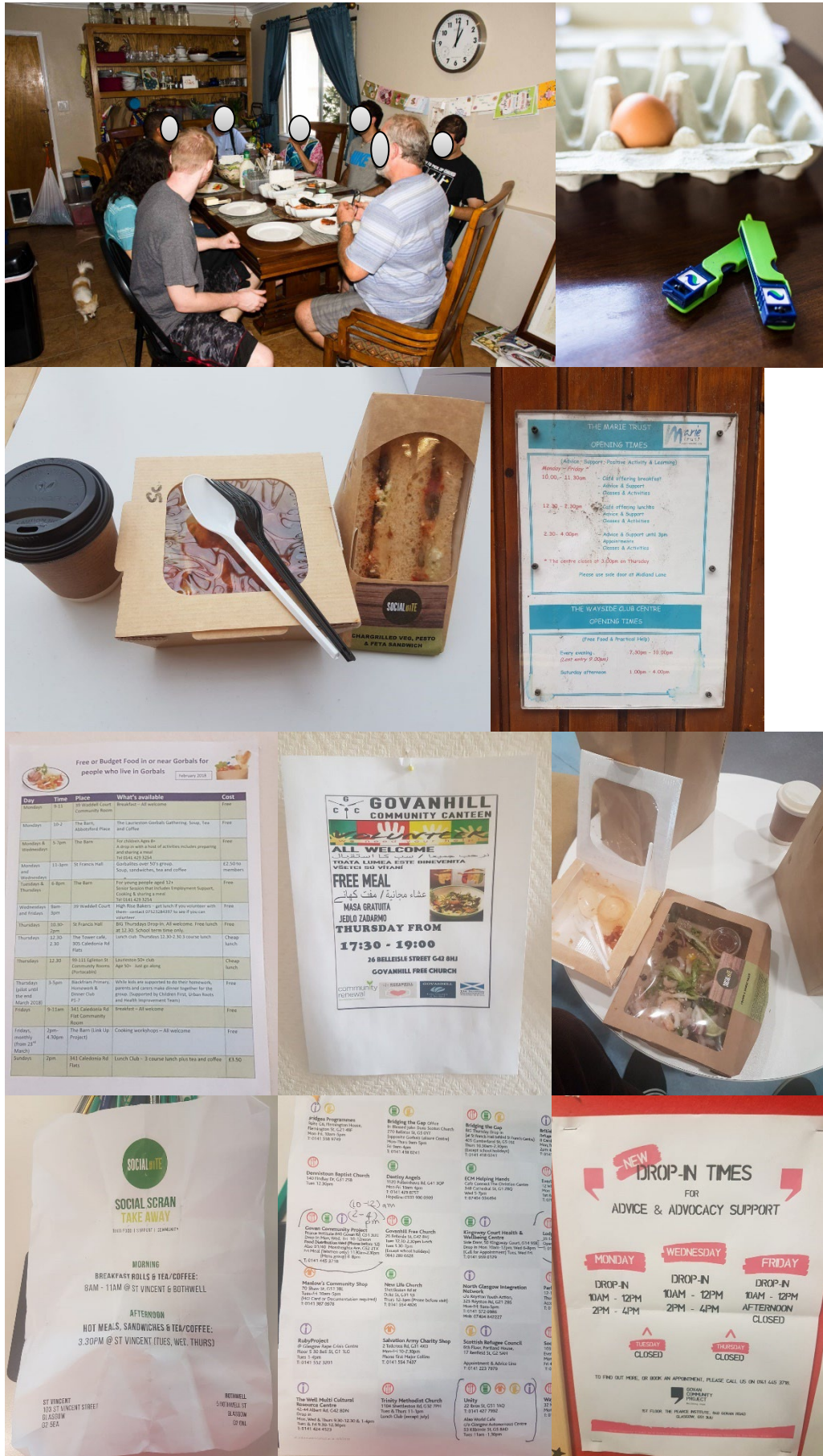
5

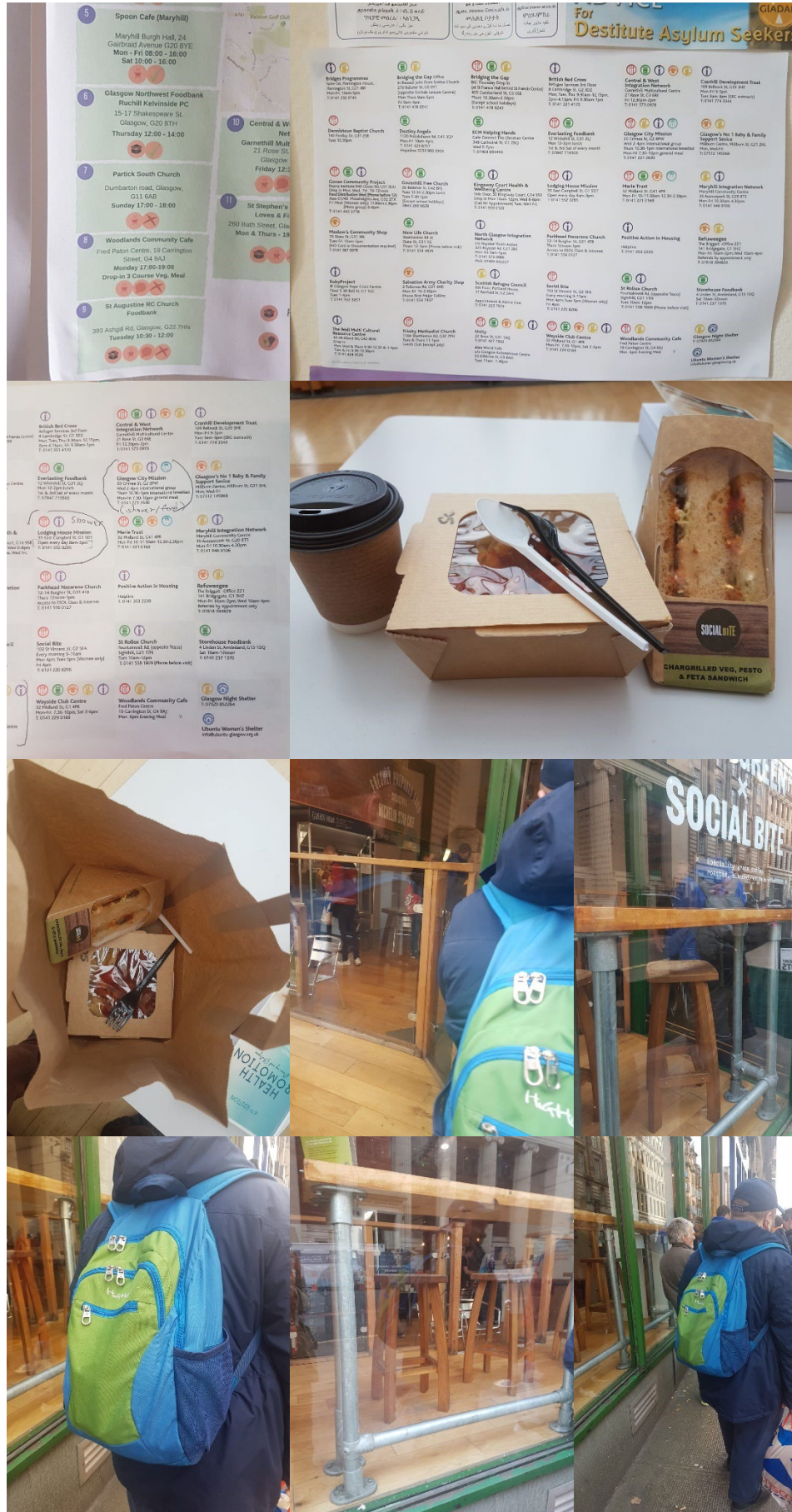












Topic Guide

1. Describe what your organisation does and your job role within it. How does the org/your job relate to policy
2. What does the term “lived experience mean to you? How do you feel lived experience research fits into the policy decision landscape? What is their experience from professional practice?
3. What does food insecurity mean to you? What policy levers do you think exacerbate/mitigate food insecurity for single men?
4. Showing examples of photos and excerpts from transcripts
 - What are your thoughts on these and what they represent?
 - Are there any which are particularly engaging or though provoking?
 - Any which confirm/disconfirm their perspective on food insecurity, particularly among single men?
5. What role do images of lived experience have as evidence in policy making? [If not covered in previous question] Can you think of any examples of lived experience influencing policy in this area?
6. Covid: These images and conversations happened prior to COVID-19. What is happening now, has your organisations aims/views on food insecurity changed during this time?

Most people don't know my situation. Most people think I've gone back to work, they see you walking about and think everything is fine. [There are] lots of services where you need to be roofless rather than homeless. [It] feels like you're hitting your head going round every corner until you find the right road.

Gary, early 50s

And that's just from a shop. Once again, when you've no money, you can't go, it doesn't matter what time it's open, it's closed, you know.

Kevin, late 50s



*And for the five week wait,
I had to borrow money, and
that's coming off this
amount. And, what
else...rent arrears, that I
got in in the five weeks...it
just goes on and on.*

Kevin, late 50s



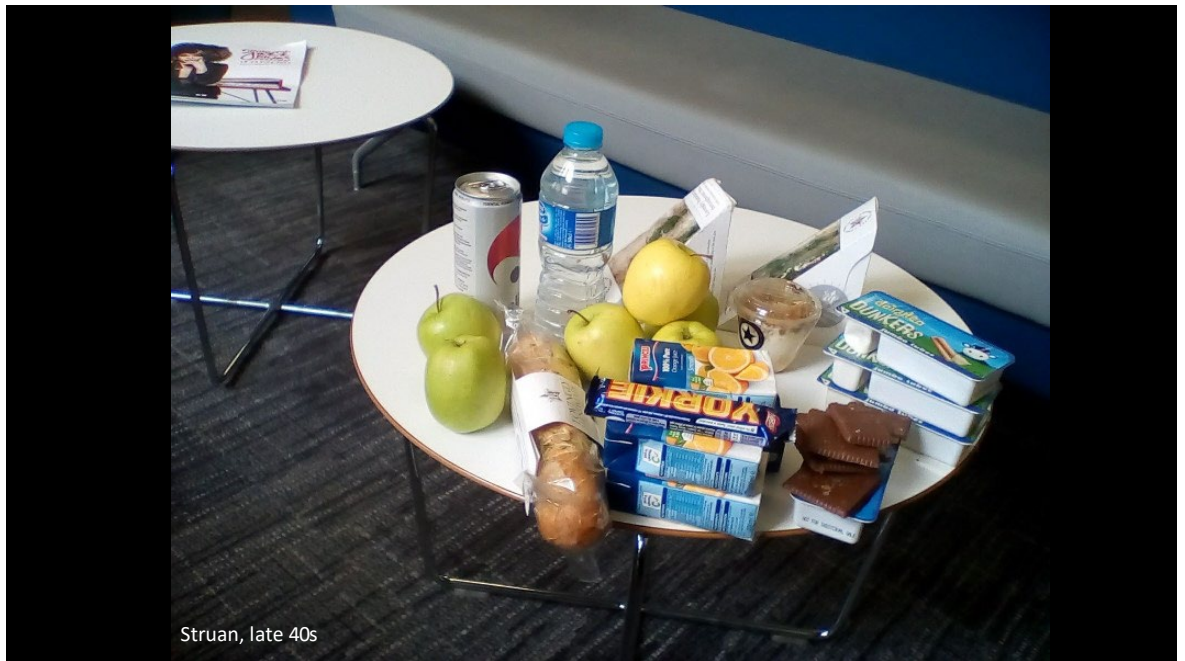
Mark, late 30s

[It's] really difficult to find support, you need to know what you're looking for, particularly when you don't have internet access to go searching.

Cameron, late 30s

Apart from being hungry, the main thing is, how you feel, just totally like, you're isolated from the rest of people around you. I mean, you're not even locked up, but you [are] effectively, it's like you've got a cage around you...You can't interact with people, because you don't go, you can't go to a cafe, you don't go to the shops...you're excluded from so much... the isolation, eh, and the torment.

Kevin, late 50s



Community gardens.
Community growing.
Community cafes....
When I was homeless for a year,
Kathryn, that's how I survived. I
would have died. Through
friends and community,
otherwise I would have died.

Joseph, late 40s

That... I wasn't sure whether to put that in. But I thought, well it's the truth. I sat with that thing at my wrist, two or three times, just because I was so depressed.

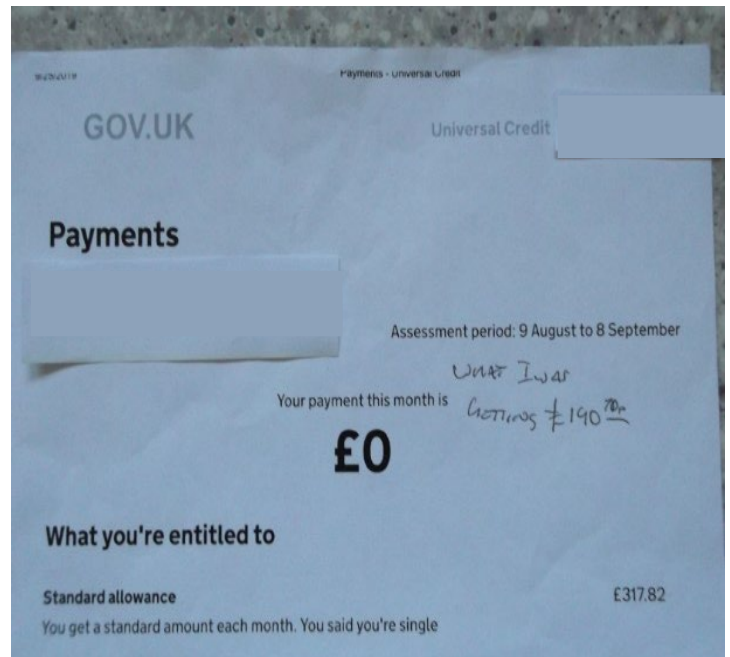
Kevin, late 50s



Zero, yeah, thanks, that was three months of that, just for missing one appointment. So that's why I took that picture, just, these guys have just decided that people can basically starve, and have no electricity... And it happens, it happened in a matter [of a few hours] of missing that appointment, I was notified, you know.

I no longer have the right to, to live, basically, yeah...

Kevin, late 50s



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