

social construction of household food insecurity: UK experiences

Advancing Food Insecurity Research in Canada

PROOF: Research to reduce food insecurity

November 17th -18th, 2016; University of Toronto

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Benefit cap will hit 116,000 of poorest families, say experts
Patrick Butler, *The Guardian*
Nov 1st 2016

Households facing loss of income include nearly 320,000 children, according to housing body

Damian Green says government's benefits cap is a 'real success'

Heather Stewart and Sarah Butler *The Guardian* Nov 7th 2016

Work and pensions secretary hails cap, set to be lowered at a cost for 88,000 families of an average of more than £2,000 a year

“By making sure that those people who are out of work are faced with the same choices as those who are in work, the benefit cap has been a real success,” he said.

“By lowering the cap today, we are ensuring the values of this government continue to chime with those of ordinary working people and delivering on our commitment to make sure work pays more than welfare.”

Last year, George Osborne announced that the cap would be lowered, saying: “It is not fair that people out of work can earn more than people in work.”

Life had already been a struggle for months when the letter arrived from the Department for Work and Pensions last week telling Alana and Mark they would be benefit capped. From Monday, it said, the amount they would receive in housing benefit support - which is already £260 a month less than their actual rent - would be cut by £50 a week.

It was a none-too-subtle signal for Alana that life was about to get several degrees harder. "Saving an extra £200 a month is going to be impossible. We can't cover the outgoings as it is. No amount of budgeting can save that sort of money. There's only so much you can save on buying basic label baked beans."

Both Alana and Mark, the parents of two small children, have lost good jobs through redundancy in the past year. They have scraped by since on her maternity allowance, borrowed cash from family and friends, and sold furniture. The cap in effect now provides them with stark alternatives: either one of them gets work (thus exempting them from the cap), or they fall rapidly into rent arrears and eviction.

Meanwhile, Alana notes that her private landlord has just served a notice saying the family's rent is going up by £25 a month. As she speculates on the increasingly limited ways in which she might cope with the cap, she recalls the offer made by her NHS health visitor on a recent visit: if she did find herself struggling to feed the baby, a voucher for the food bank could be made available.

They now face an anxious wait: Mark has been promised a minimum wage job in the care sector. This would rescue them from the cap but no start date has been set. The longer the delay, the more debt, stress and rent arrears will build, and the prospect of eviction will be more likely. "If there's a choice between paying the rent and feeding myself and the kids, I'll feed my kids," said Alana.

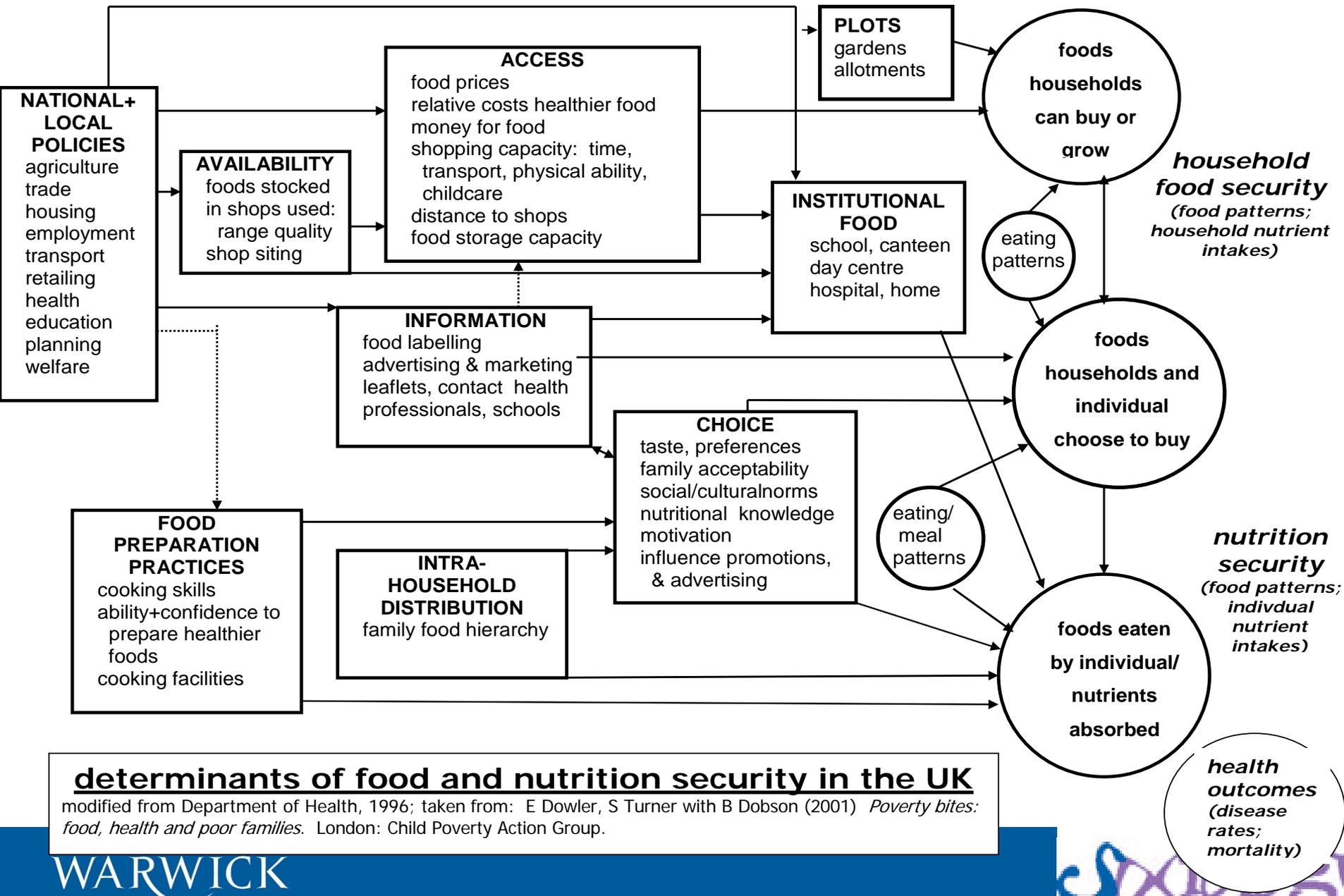
case study

Patrick Butler Social policy editor

Monday 7 November 2016 07.23 GMT

we've been here before...

- Seebohm Rowntree 1899; 1920s
 - Committee Physical Deterioration of the Nation; school meals
- John Boyd Orr 1936 *Food Health and Income*, Macmillan
- WWII rationing; welfare state ('cradle to grave')
- 1990s lone parent study; Sustain Food Poverty group; *Breadline Britain* survey
- Low Income Diet Project Team 1996 (Dept Health)
- research, advocacy & measurement food access;
 - [Policy Action Team 13: Improving Shopping Access \(Social Exclusion Unit\)](#)
 - terminology household food security: FAO & USDA
- Low Income and Diet Methods Study (MAFF) → LIDNS 2007 (Food Standards Agency)
- Minimum Income Standards – budget standards
- much local work by public health, community groups, local authorities; by devolved administrations



context

- economic austerity imposed:
 - public sector cuts
 - job security & low wages
 - regional variations in costs
- dismantling of social security:
 - levels and entitlement
 - caps and sanctions
- food system problems – food is too cheap!
 - food & fuel prices have increased
- unfair taxation system

* some households hit by several cuts and reforms

* often gendered effects

food, fuel, finance

tackling the poverty premium

walking the breadline

the scandal of food poverty in 21st century Britain



FORCE-FED

Does the food system constrict healthy choices for typical British families?

Feeding Britain

A strategy for zero hunger in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

The report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger in the United Kingdom



HUNGER PAINS

Life inside foodbank Britain
Kayleigh Garthwaite

Foreword by Jack Monroe
Afterword by Linda Tirado



FIRST WORLD HUNGER REVISITED
Food Charity or the Right to Food?
Second Edition
EDITED BY GRAHAM RICHES
TIINA SILVASTI

FABIAN POLICY REPORT



HUNGRY FOR CHANGE

The final report of the Fabian Commission on Food and Poverty

The Child Poverty Action Group, Church of England, Oxfam GB and The Trussell Trust

Emergency Use Only
Understanding and reducing the use of food banks in the UK

Authors: Jane Perry, Martin Williams, Tom Sefton and Moussa Haddad



Brighton & Hove Food Poverty Action Plan 2015-2018



#cheshirehunger

Understanding Emergency Food Provision in West Cheshire



Spencer, A., Ogden, C. &

Research Report by West Cheshire Foodbank, Cheshire West Citizens Advice Bureau, and The University of Oxford to the Homeless, The

#stillhungry

Who is hungry, for how long, and why?



Garratt, E., Spencer, A. & Ogden, C. (July 2016)

Research Report by West Cheshire Foodbank, The University of Oxford, The University of Birmingham, and the University of West of England, Bristol

Food poverty in Oxford: A qualitative study in Barton and Rose Hill

With recommendations for Good Food Oxford



Marzen Food Surplus Café, November 2015

Frances Hansford and Rachel Friedman

December 2015

supported and funded by:



Bristol's Good Food Action Plan 2015-2018

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| TRANSFORM BRISTOL'S FOOD CULTURE | SAFEGUARD THE DIVERSITY OF FOOD RETAIL | SAFEGUARD LAND FOR FOOD PRODUCTION |
| INCREASE URBAN FOOD PRODUCTION | A GOOD FOOD PLAN FOR BRISTOL | REDISTRIBUTE, RECYCLE & COMPOST FOOD WASTE |
| PROTECT KEY INFRASTRUCTURE FOR LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIES | INCREASE THE MARKET OPPORTUNITIES FOR LOCAL & REGIONAL SUPPLIERS | SUPPORT COMMUNITY FOOD ENTERPRISES |

Food insecurity in Birmingham — a city-level response?

PROJECT REPORT & DISCUSSION DOCUMENT



Beyond the Food Bank 2015

London Food Poverty Profile



999 FOOD

EMERGENCY FOOD AID IN THE THAMES VALLEY

A SNAPSHOT

ALISON WEBSTER | DEPARTMENT OF MISSION CHURCH OF ENGLAND DIOCESE OF OXFORD



STILL HUNGRY

New Foodbank research sheds light on who faces hunger, why and for how long, in West Cheshire

- Crisis could hit anyone: food was given to people living in all 46 wards
- Benefit delays were responsible for one in five referrals; benefit sanctions were responsible for 1 in 12. However, the duration of crisis for those sanctioned was considerably longer
- 1 in 5 of those affected by benefit sanctions were children

..qualitative evidence from people referred to the foodbank -
Will's story is one example

While looking for new work, Will paid to go on a chainsaw license course in Preston. Getting up at 4am to attend meant he was unable to apply for jobs, but this meant he missed the target number of jobs needed for Job Seekers Allowance and his money was stopped for two weeks. Will was then put on a mandatory work programme, but was unable to collect his money from the Post Office until 9am, so couldn't get to the programme for 7am. He was sanctioned for two months.

RECOMMENDATIONS: improved Job Centre Plus administration and service; reformed benefit sanctions policy and practice; improved access to the local welfare assistance schemes available.

#stillhungry

Who is hungry, for how long, and why?

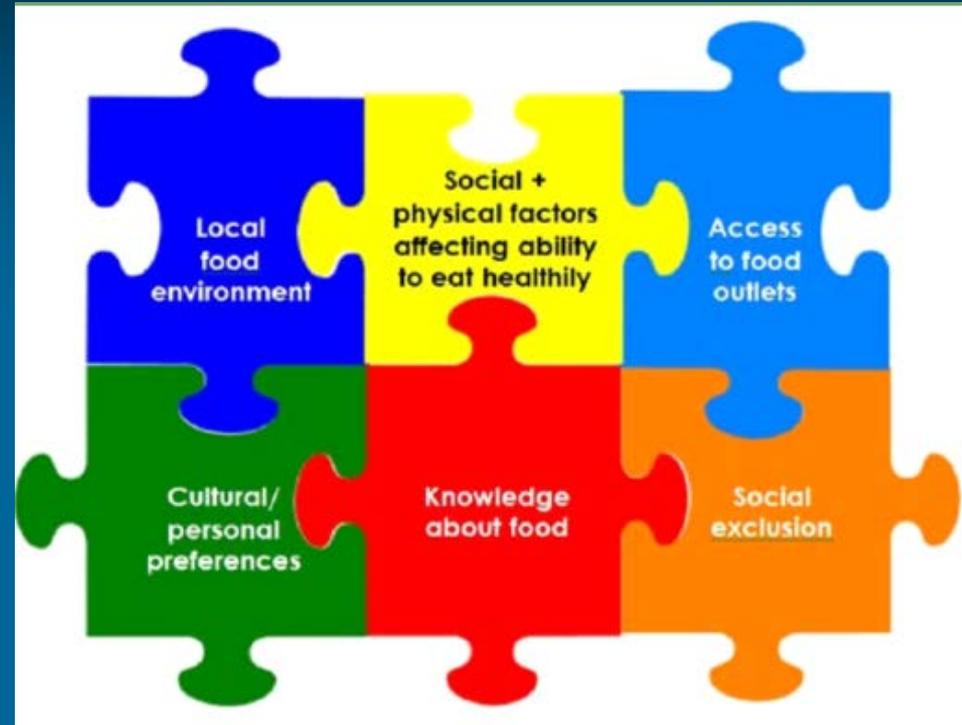


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food poverty experiences:

- time poor; exhausted/ill
- equipment
- transport to shops
- decline in local shops, services
- normative food expectations
- marketing
- children's tastes dominate
- no pleasure
- indebtedness
- food 'flexible' budget item



Maslen et al 2013 *Food Poverty: What does the Evidence Tell Us?* Bristol City Council

a complex issue

food poverty: structural causes

social security: sanctions https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2w9S_yKx4Q#t=64
benefit delays, errors

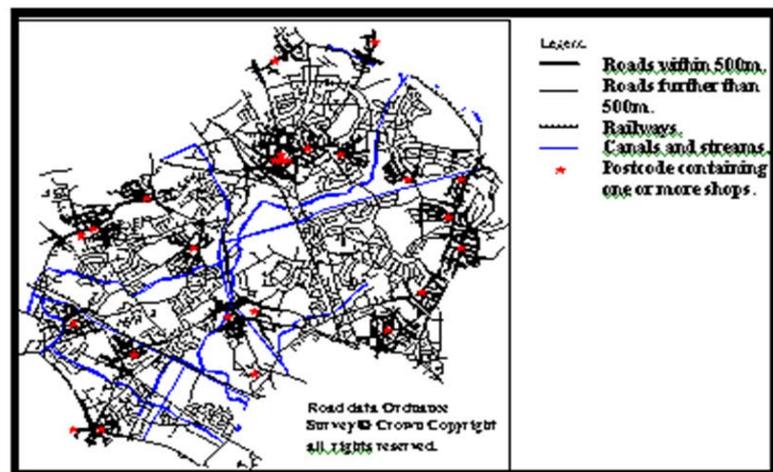
low wages: 1 in 5 young workers on NMW (eg catering) went to a food bank in the last year

poor food access

shops inadequate where poor people live



Figure 5. Map 5. Roads within 500m of a postcode containing one or more shops where food is reasonably priced and which sell more than 8 kinds of fresh fruit and vegetables.



food poverty: structural causes

poor food access; normative choices



soft drinks - Barton shop, Oxford
Nov 2015 (F Hansford)



main street, Welsh city,
summer 2007 (L Davis)

comparison consensually defined Minimum Income Standards for different household types, with social security and National Living Wage

Davis et al, 2016

<https://www.jrf.org.uk/report/minimum-income-standard-uk-2016>

Table 1: Minimum income requirements and comparison with benefits and incomes on the NLW

| | Weekly budget requirement (excluding rent and childcare), April 2016 | Percentage of budget provided by safety net benefits* | | Percentage of budget achieved by working full-time on National Minimum Wage/NLW** | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|------|---|------------------------|---------------|
| | | 2010 | 2016 | 2010 | 2016 under tax credits | 2016 under UC |
| Single working-age person | £198.85 | 41% | 39% | 79% | 77% | 77% |
| Couple with two children aged 4 and 7 | £468.98 | 62% | 61% | 89% | 88% | 96% |
| Lone parent with one child aged 1*** | £300.73 | 65% | 56% | 97% | 67% | 69% |
| Pensioner couple | £267.39 | 102% | 98% | | | |

* Income Support/Jobseeker's Allowance or Pension Credit, plus Child Tax Credit and Child Benefit for families, and Winter Fuel Allowance for pensioners. Comparison with MIS excluding rent, childcare and Council Tax.

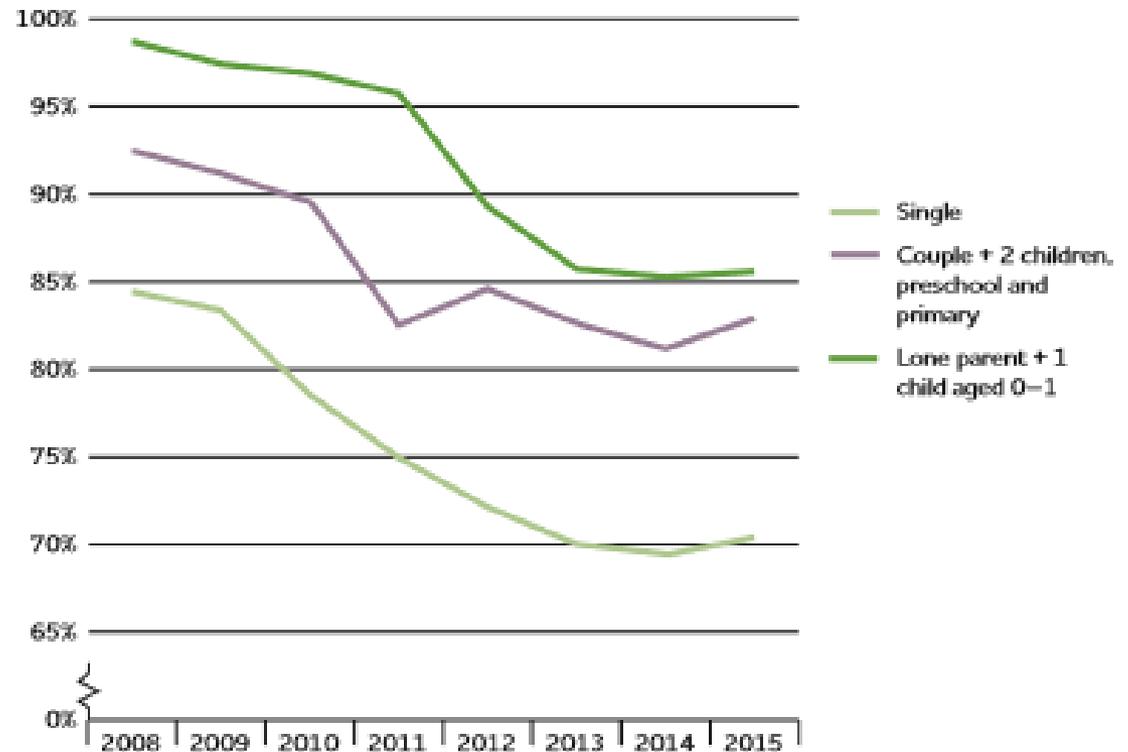
** Assumes a modest rent, and that families with young children need to pay for childcare.

comparison consensually defined Minimum Income Standards for different household types

In relation to National Minimum Wage 2008-2015

Hirsch 2015
www.jrf.org.uk

Figure 3: Disposable income on National Minimum Wage as a percentage of MIS, 2008–2015



Note: Data see Annex, Table F.

Table 6: Disposable income on National Minimum Wage compared to MIS, 2008 and 2015 – surplus/deficit in 2015 prices (per week)

| | 2008 | 2015* | Deterioration 2008–2015** |
|-----------------------|---------|---------|---------------------------|
| Single | –£26.77 | –£53.63 | £26.87 |
| Couple + 2 children | –£30.76 | –£75.38 | £44.62 |
| Lone parent + 1 child | –£3.57 | –£38.72 | £35.15 |

Notes: * Pre-Universal Credit – i.e. for those claiming existing working-age benefits and tax credits.

** How much less disposable income rose than rising minimum costs.

growing research on how people manage to eat

- budgeting strategies: shopping, cooking and eating differently
 - ask friends and family; buy cheaper food, buy poorer quality food; grow more food; reduce variety (can't afford to experiment); borrow to buy food; go without food (Goode, 2012; Dowler 1997; Dowler et al 2007; 2011; Kneafsey et al, 2012)
- always used multiple practices and systems – but now more extreme
- juggling bills, borrow, sell, go without, (steal)
- turn to charitable sources for help with food – food banks

what we have seen since 2010 ...

- many asking for help with food ⇒ growing response
- local councils, faith groups, increasingly involved:
 - helping support food banks and projects
 - investigating needs
- UK CAB & others see households left with no money
- little evidence of fraud, duplicity
- evolving policy terminology: **emergency, food aid; claimants ≠ food poor or food insecure**
- policy losing sight long-term drivers & experiences
- inadequate systems being entrenched

emerging contested views on charitable food (food banks, social supermarkets, local retail solutions)

- does not address structural causes; individualizes responsibility [response]
- works through unelected, unaccountable, self-appointed groups; sometimes hidden agendas
- relies on problematics of food system, people's generosity, volunteers; inadequate to meet need
- is based on client relationships, which undermine rights based entitlements
- allows politicians, media, to demonize claimants + social security claimants + poorer – and challenge 'fairness'
- **depoliticizes food aspects of poverty**
- **hides corporatization & privatization social security while enabling social 'feel good' at poorer people's expense**

“Social problems are dysfunctions of society and [potentially] degenerative diseases of the body politic. They are ills. But for the management of institutions and, above all, for business management, they represent challenges. They are major sources of opportunity. For it is the function of business [...] to satisfy a social need and at the same time serve their institutions, by making resolution of a social problem into a business opportunity.”

Drucker, 2013 “Social impacts and social problems”, *People and Performance*, ch 29, Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 298-311

food poverty and household food insecurity: current responses & challenges

- devolved nations: different framings and responses
 - (Scotland: Right to Food; Wales: Future generations)
- civil society, think-tanks, professional groups: research, inquiries, lobbying
 - Food Foundation & others: measurement HHFS
 - CAP, Sustain, Oxfam: End Hunger UK; Food Justice Movement (ground up)
 - COMPASS - *Secure & Free: 5+ solutions to socio-economic insecurity*; workshops
- cities, local authorities: monitoring; responses
- shifting responsibilities from the state?
 - social security; health and social care
 - food industry
- whose voices heard? whose narratives?

Brighton and Hove Food Poverty Action Plan 2015-18

preventative approach: underlying causes addressed, looking beyond food to employment, benefits, housing and fuel costs, indebtedness



Crisis food poverty

Food banks and hunger are just the tip of the iceberg

Long term food poverty

Our approach focuses on the **much larger** group of people struggling **long term** to eat a healthy diet, and aims to **prevent** them reaching crisis point.



Food poverty: A preventative approach

What prevents food poverty?



Scottish Gov't Fair Food Transformation Fund 2016

- applications invited, part of £1 million-a-year Fair Food Fund, supporting more dignified responses to food poverty
- to help Scotland become 'Good Food Nation' - where all have access to healthy, nutritious food without needing emergency food aid - projects to show dignified response to food poverty
<https://beta.gov.scot/policies/food-and-drink/good-food-nation/>
- projects must show how meet 4 principles (Independent Short-Life Working Group on Food Poverty):
 - people with direct experience of food poverty help shape and deliver the service or solution
 - projects recognise social value of food, build community around food to create a place where people choose to go, rather than have to go
 - projects provide opportunities for people to contribute
 - projects ensure that people can choose what they eat; choice should include fresh and healthy food; that people can retain dignity by paying something

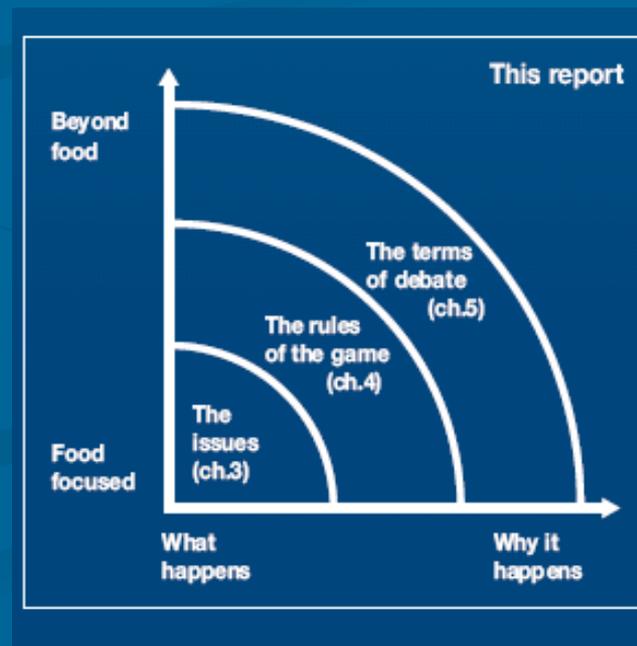
Food Justice: report of the Food & Fairness Inquiry 2010 Food Ethics Council

deliberative, evidence based process + explicit ethical framework:

- **fair shares** - equality of outcomes - look at distribution of wellbeing
- **fair play** – equality of opportunity - look at access to means of achieving outcomes
- **fair say** – autonomy and voice - look at freedom to lead life I value & to influence decisions

each examined for: **food security, sustainability, public health**

<http://www.foodethicscouncil.org/society/food-justice.html>





Commissioners

- **Geoff Tansey, chair** Trustee, Food Ethics Council; Curator, Food Systems Academy
- **Niall Cooper**, Director, Church Action on Poverty
- **Tara Garnett**, Founder and Director of Food Climate Research Network
- **Diana Holland**, Assistant General Secretary, Unite
- **Andrew Kuyk**, Former Director of Sustainability, Food & Drink Federation
- **Dr John Middleton**, Former Vice President, UK Faculty of Public Health
- **Jeanette Orrey**, Co-Founder, Food for Life Partnership

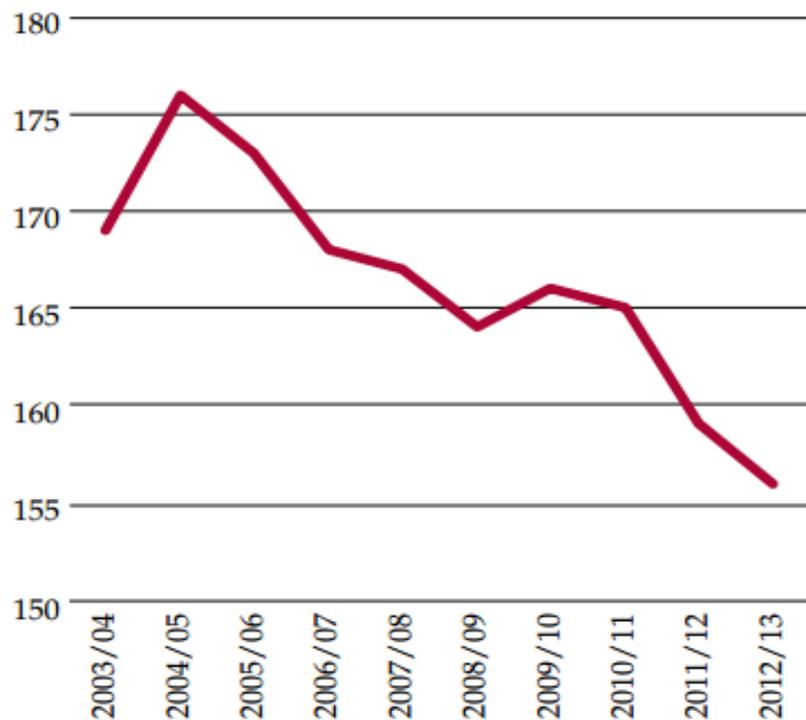
Secretariat:

- **Cameron Tait**, Secretary & Senior Researcher; **Sarah Woods**, Researcher
- **Rob Tinker**, Researcher; **Daisy Srblin**, Research Fellow

- 6 evidence hearings
 - London, Sheffield, Lincolnshire, Glasgow, on:
Affordability; Context & Access; Health;
Environment; Supply chain & society; Scottish
perspectives
- Invited written submissions /feedback
- Expert panel of people living in poverty
- Interim Report (before 2015 elections)

FOOD & POVERTY

FIGURE 1: Disposable income for lowest income quintile, 2003/04–2012/13



Source: Households Below Average Income 1994/95–2012/13 (Department for Work and Pensions, July 2014). Disposable income measured in £pw, equivalised at 2012/13 prices.

- Those on low incomes losing out most from UK food system
- Food spend 16-35 % of income
- Childhood obesity rising in lowest income households
- Retail competition kept prices down but put huge pressure on supply chain



...the “agri-food system is completely not fit for purpose going into the future, even though it has been relatively good to us over the last 20 or 30 years.”

Tim Benton

UK champion for global food security &
Professor of population ecology, University of Leeds

five key principles for policy:

1. all in UK should have secure access to nutritious, sustainable food they can afford; none should live in household food insecurity
2. food banks & other charitable food provision should become unnecessary by 2020
3. decent work best means of sustainable food security most households but social security system has critical role for many, in & out of work
4. links between low income & diet and related ill-health should be broken
5. those on low incomes protected from rising prices & other potential negative consequences of dealing with food system challenges

three key tensions:

- health
- working terms and conditions
- sustainability

14 action points - 2 key:

- ❖ **need new cross-departmental minister for eliminating household food insecurity**
- ❖ **measurement household food insecurity**

need to get to sustainable 'just' food and nutrition systems

- people's rights to produce, consume food respected
- socially & environmentally sustainable ways of obtaining healthy food through production, purchase, earning enough
- sustainable ways and means of researching, producing, distributing food; grounded in/ governed by just, equitable, moral, ethical social values
- food for health should be obtained in ways that uphold human dignity
- solutions to problems are 'joined up'

sustainable food systems contribute to high levels of wellbeing within healthy, just societies, that live within environmental limits