

# Policy, inequality and the cost of living crisis

13<sup>th</sup> December 2022



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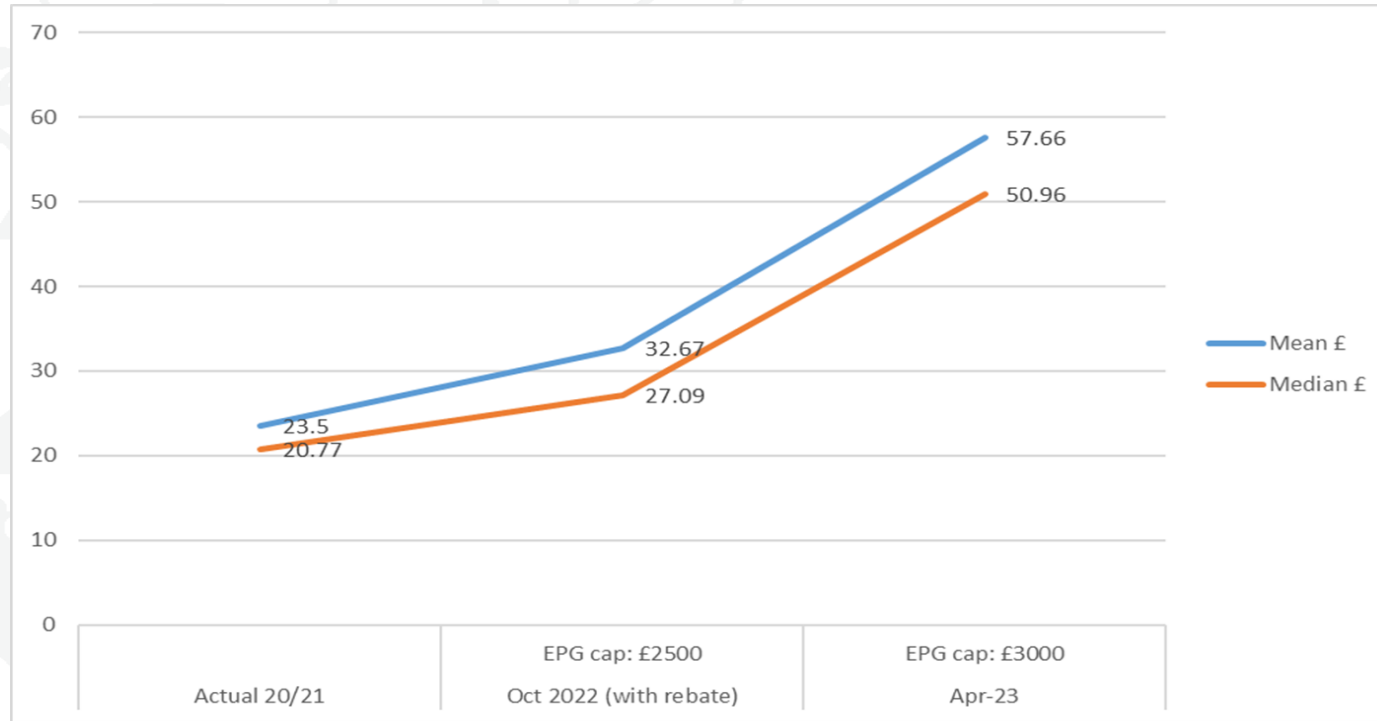


# Fuel poverty and the cost of living crisis

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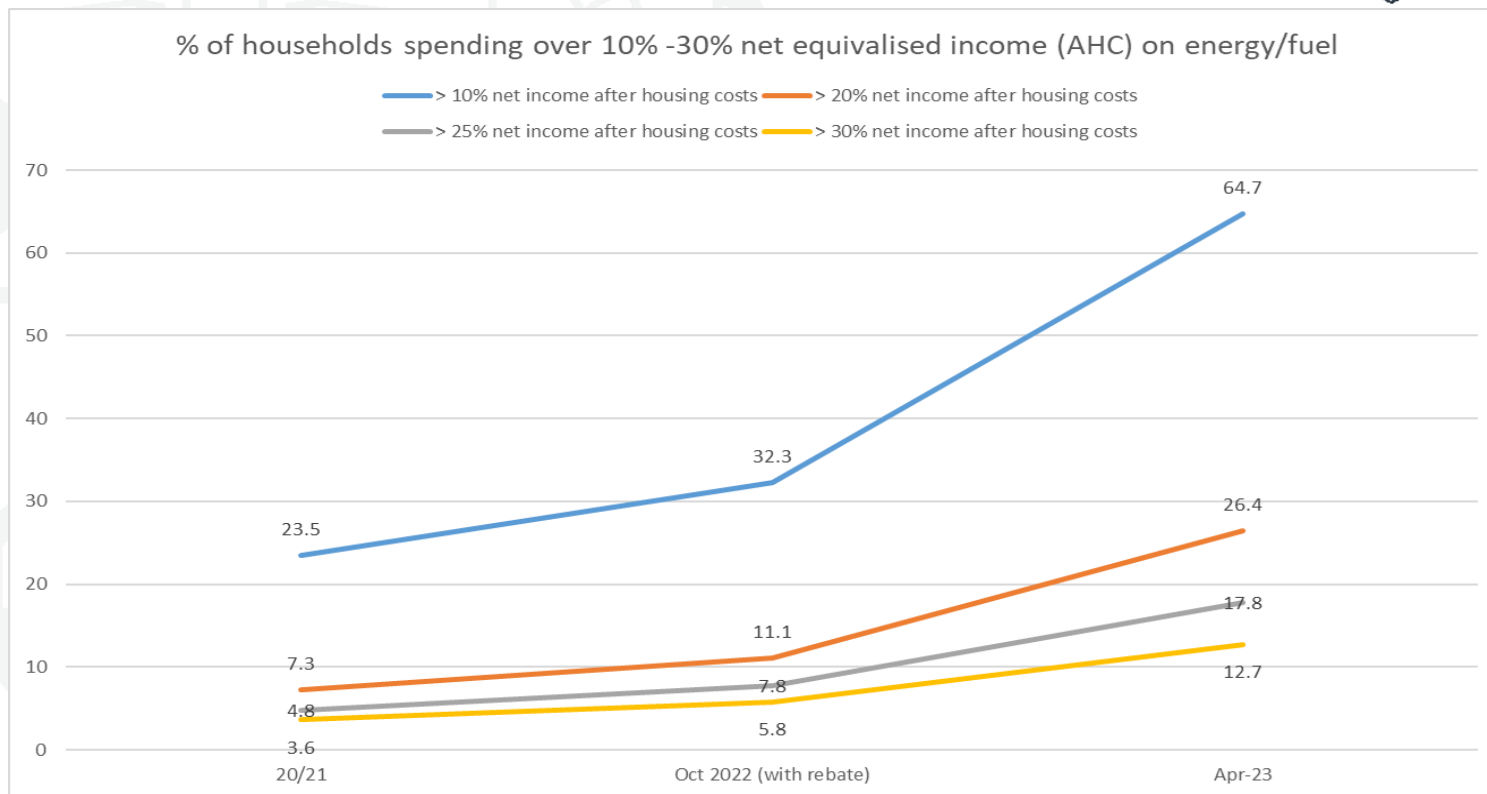


# Cost of domestic energy/fuel: projections



Source: Own analysis of LCFS 2020/21 weighted data

# Fuel poverty in 2022/2023: projections



Source: Own analysis of LCFS 2020/21 weighted data



## Fuel poverty in 2022/2023: projections

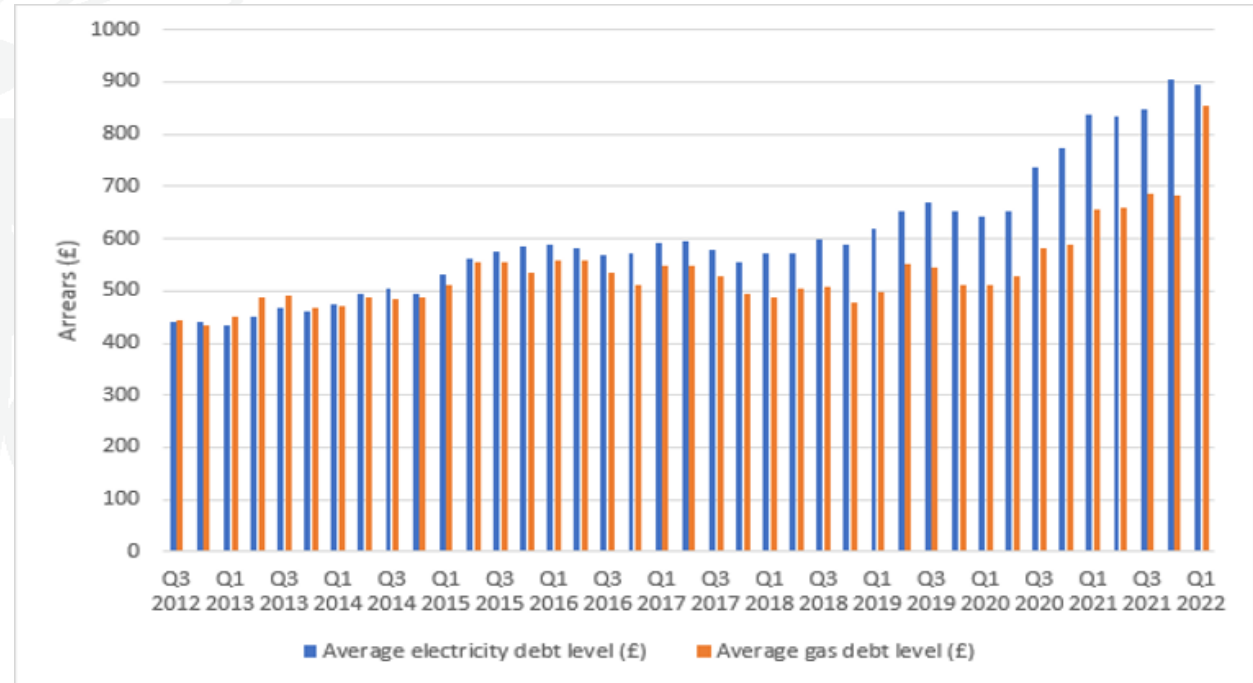
	Actual 2020/21	Apr-23 EPG cap: £3000 CoL payment applied
<b>% of households living in poverty AHC only</b>	29%	27%
<b>% of households living in poverty AHC and AEC</b>	32%	34%
<b>Average poverty gap AHC and AEC</b>	Mean £95 Median £81	Mean £109 Median £92
<b>Number of households living in poverty AHC and AEC</b>	8.9m	9.4m
<b>Number of people living in poverty AHC and AEC</b>	19m	20.5m

Source: Own analysis of LCFS 2020/21 weighted data



## Other indicators of fuel poverty - debt

*'...unfortunately, a lot of my neighbours have trouble paying for their electricity...the prepayment metres go off every morning for the people who are into debt... So it's just kind of a reminder that if people are struggling to pay for their electricity' (BWHCTcjs)*

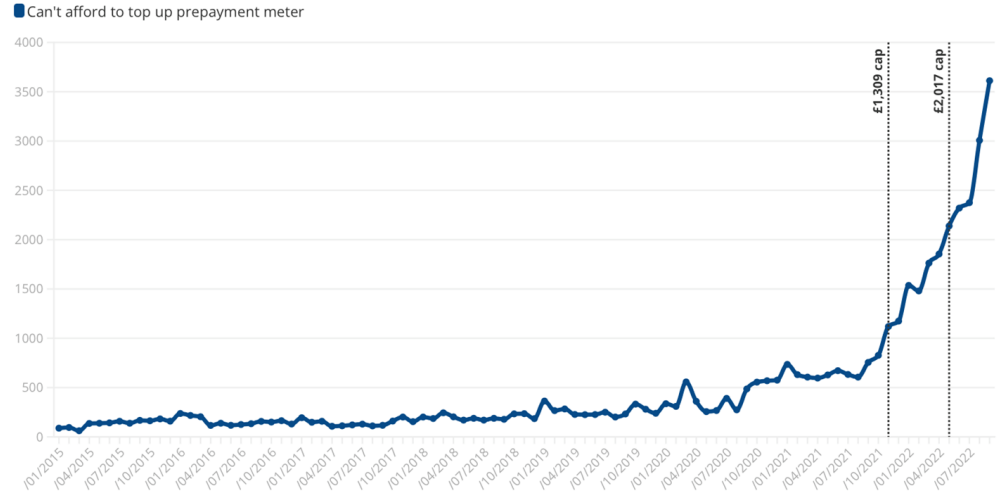




# Other indicators of fuel poverty - self disconnection

*'...unfortunately, a lot of my neighbours have trouble paying for their electricity...the prepayment metres go off every morning for the people who are into debt... So it's just kind of a reminder that if people are struggling to pay for their electricity' (BWHCTcjs)*

The number of people we've seen who can't afford to top up their prepayment meter each month



Data for England and Wales. Data is from Local Citizens Advice offices and the Citizens Advice Consumer Service.





# The effects of fuel poverty

- Impact of living in poor housing conditions
  - An increased likelihood of respiratory illnesses
  - Increased use of health services: Liddell found infants in fuel poor households had a 30% greater risk of admission to hospital
  - Poor housing conditions has a substantial impact on the mental health of children and young people (UN 2023, Marmot Review 2011)
  - Linked to reduced educational attainment and attendance (conversely, energy efficiency interventions lead to improved attendance and attainment).
  - Infants from fuel poor homes also found to have lower weight gain
- Impact on mental health
- Impact on social relations and social inclusion
- Strain on other household finances - ‘heat or eat’, debt





# Experiencing high energy costs

*'I mean, we've even got to a point ....friends have bought me coal for my birthday, because they know the situation. Now...a, I find it embarrassing, and b, it is my birthday present. It's like, I'm getting coal'*

*'I've arranged with the [provider] that my electric doesn't go off at all even though I pay through a top up meter, it's not meant to go off at all but it does...I have a daughter that's on a feeding machine...she's fed every night for 12 hours*

*'when you see people, you talk to them, you have a chat about various things...the topic at the moment is 'What is happening? Can you survive? Why is it so expensive?' So, this is normal conversation where it used be, 'Hey, how are you doing? I haven't seen for you a long time'. You start talking about the price [of things]'*

# Addressing fuel poverty



- Policy interventions can make a substantial difference:
  - Improve housing: e.g. energy efficiency improvements
  - Reduce bills: e.g. social tariffs/discounts
  - Protect/raise incomes: e.g. uprate benefits

# Food insecurity research

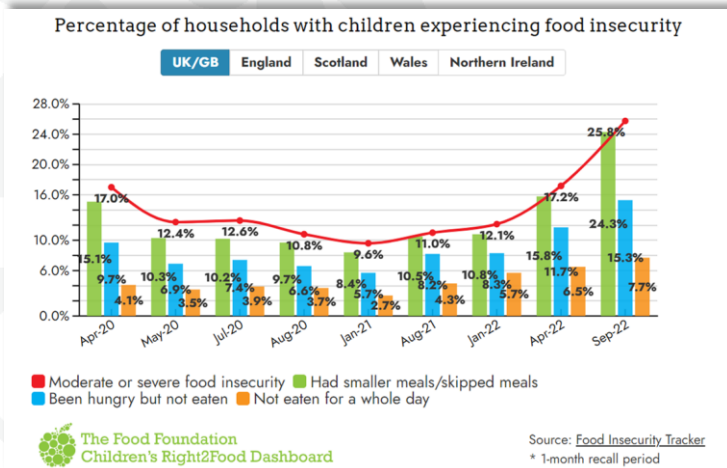
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Health Sciences and the  
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# Food insecurity themes

- Families and children
- School food
- Community Food assets

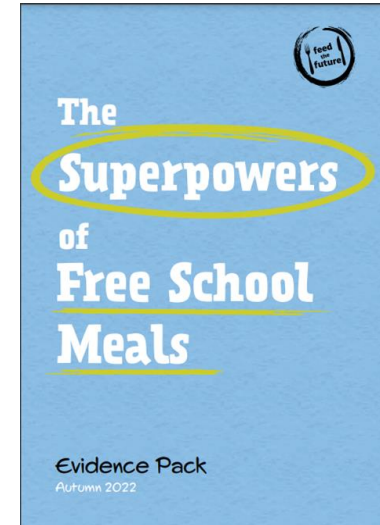


Annual CPI inflation rate for all foods and non-alcoholic beverages



Source: [ONS, Consumer price inflation tables](#)

# School Food



# School Food

FSM eligibility criteria • FSM auto-enrolment • FSM allowance • HAF Programme



A Yorkshire-based review of the implementation and impact of the Holiday Activities and Food programme

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS  
OCTOBER 2021

Open access

## BMJ Open Are free school meals failing for Exploring the relationship between child food insecurity, child mental health and free school meal status during COVID-19: national cross-sectional surveys

Tiffany C Yang, Madeline Power, Rachael H Moss, Bridget Lockyer, Wundy Burton, Bob Doherty

To cite this article: Yang TC, Power M, Moss RH, et al. Are free school meals failing for exploring the relationship between child food insecurity, child mental health and free school meal status during COVID-19: national cross-sectional surveys. *BMJ Open* 2021;15:e025707. doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-025707

For a full list of author affiliations and additional supplemental material for this paper, see the article online.

To view these files, please visit the journal online at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2021-025707>.

Received 07 November 2021; Accepted 19 May 2022

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BMJ Open 2022;15:e025707

doi:10.1136/bmjopen-2021-025707

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UNIVERSITY of York  
The Department of Health Sciences



FSM Allowance Information

### Background to this research project

In secondary schools in the UK, young people

### AUTOMATIC AWARD FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS INFORMATION SHEET – AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2022

- ▶ You have received a letter because we know that you are a parent/carer with child/children who may be at nursery or school. You do not appear to have a current Free School Meal award for your dependants and we think you may be entitled to one. We will run a data matching exercise using pupil records and housing benefit data to identify the children who might be entitled to a free school meal.
- ▶ The data matching exercise does involve the processing of your personal data, but we process this information because it is in the Council's legitimate interests to do so and it means that we can help families and schools get the services they need.
- ▶ We will use your surname, National Insurance number and your date of birth so that we can check if you qualify for free school meals. When we use your information, the government's electronic free school meals checking service gives us a simple reply – YES or NO. This is how we check to see if you qualify for free school meals.

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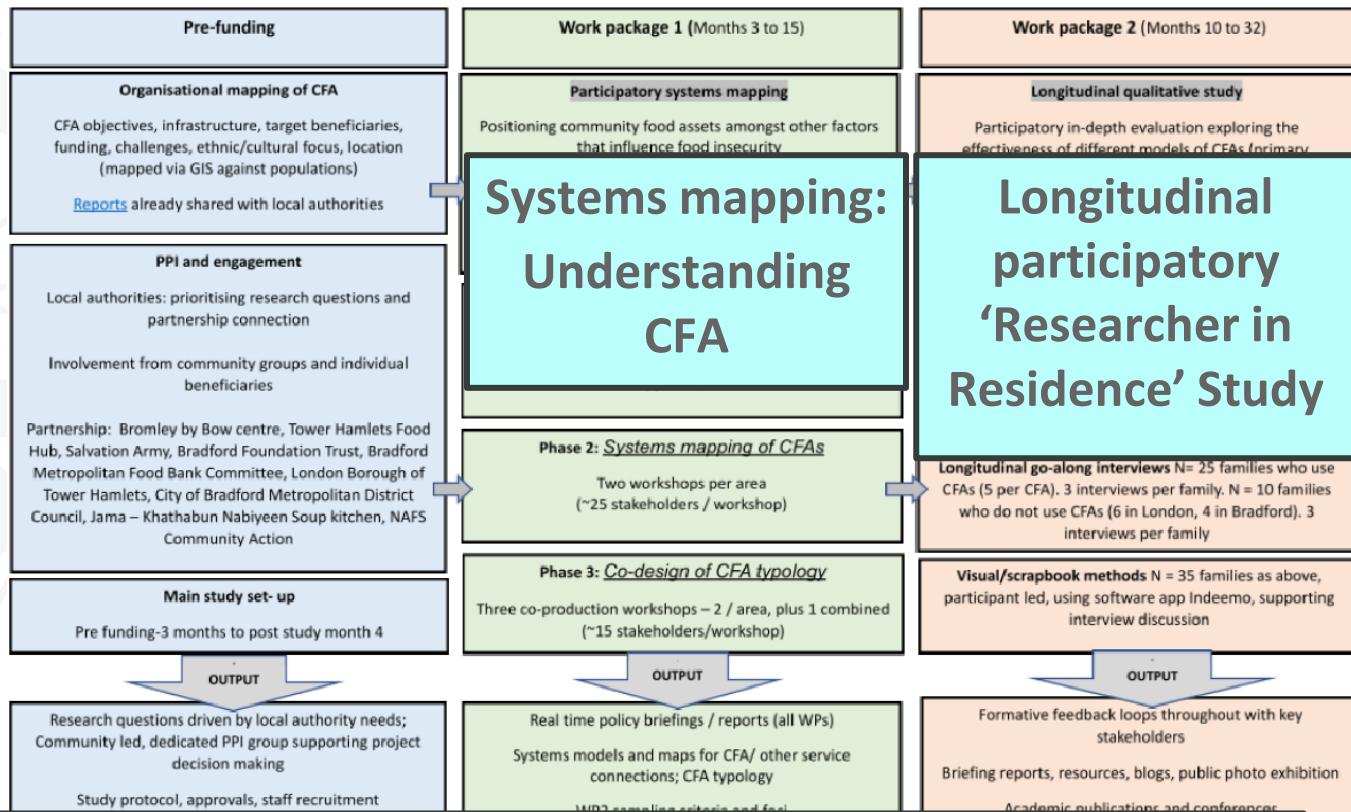
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BMJ Open 2022;15:e025707

# Community food assets

NIHR PHR  
Co-lead: Dr Laura Sheard

Role of CFA to reduce reliance on emergency food



## Maximising impact

Defra and local gov real time policy briefings • Public facing events • Actionable toolkits

# Critical approaches to food charity

•ESRC & Wellcome Trust

LSE British Politics and Policy  
November 28th, 2022  
0 comments | 13 shares  
Estimated read

Exploring the ethical complexity of food charity



Hundreds of thousands use food banks on a monthly basis. Maddy Power argues that food charity facilitates public spending cuts and employs elaborate tactics to monitor fraud, legitimating the classic deserving/undeserving dichotomy. Food insecurity is individualised, obscuring the systemic issues that underpin the need of charity.

Chancellor Jeremy Hunt did his very best to paint his Autumn Statement as progressive, but the state pension in line with inflation is the handiwork of extra funding for

Article

Disciplinary and pastoral power, food and poverty in late-modernity

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University of Bradford, England

Abstract

Using a Foucauldian perspective, we explicate the systems of power which shape the lives of women in or at risk of 'food poverty'. We develop a theoretical framework of power for analyses of contemporary food poverty, which we apply to data from focus groups with women on low incomes in two cities in the north of England. Our data underlines the repressive power of the state as well as the broader chronicity of state surveillance. We argue that, while disciplinary and pastoral power may characterise the majority of food banks, alternative logics of mutual aid are evident within some food aid providers. We underline the power of governmental discourse in constituting gendered subjectivities and find that the most potent form of coercion is derived from self-regulation. The article closes by exploring possibilities for praxis via discursive resistance.

Key words

food banks, food poverty, Foucault, gender, power

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FOREWORD BY KATE PICKETT

HUNGER,  
WHITENESS  
AND AN INEQUALITY  
OF POWER  
RELIGION  
NEOLIBERALISM  
BRITAIN

MADDY POWER

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All in it Together? Community Food Aid in a Multi-Ethnic Context

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Abstract

This paper derives from a study of community food aid in a multi-ethnic, multi-faith city in the North of England. The paper begins to make sense of the diversity of types of food insecurity assistance, examines the potential exclusion of certain groups from receipt of food aid, and explores the relationship between food aid providers and the state. Faith-based food aid is common in the case study area, particularly among food bank provision to the most 'deserving' clients. While food aid is adopting service responsibilities previously borne by the state, this does not imply an extension of the 'shadow state'. Rather, it appears reflective of a pre-welfare state system of food distribution, supported by religious institutions and individual/business philanthropy, but adapted to be consistent with elements of the 'Big Society' narrative. Most faith-based providers are Christian. There is little Muslim provision of (or utilisation of) food aid, despite the local demographic context. This raises concerns as to the unintentional exclusion of ethnic and religious groups, which we discuss in the concluding sections.

Introduction

Food insecurity in the United Kingdom (UK) has apparently increased dramatically since 2008. Local communities across the UK have responded



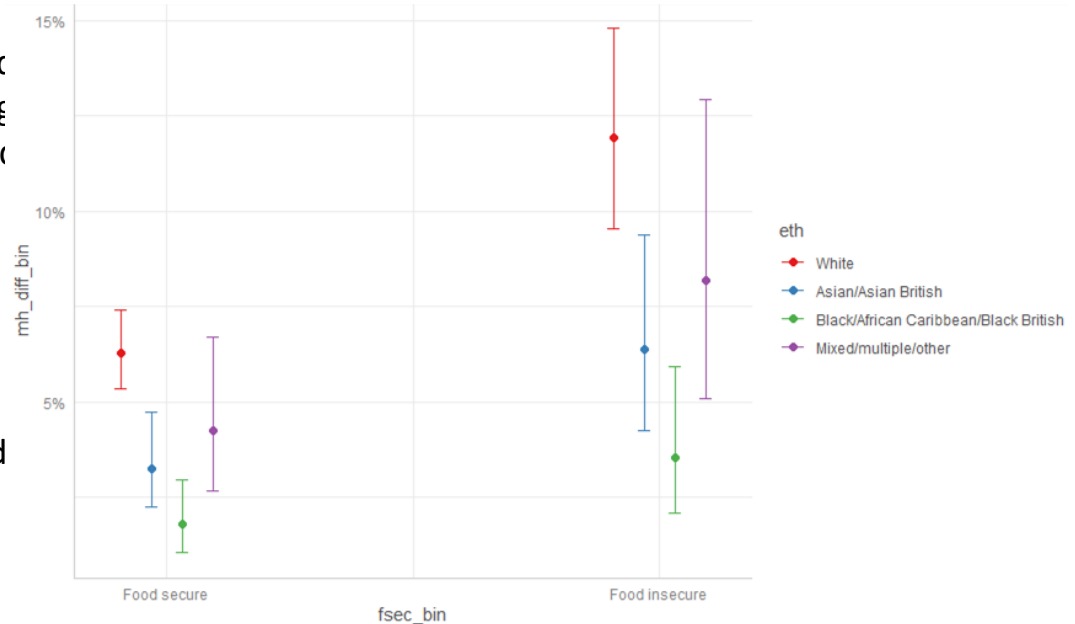
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# Food for Thought

## Food insecurity, ethnicity and mental health

- Family Resource Survey 2019-2020
- Positive relationship between experiencing food insecurity and increasing levels of anxiety among all ethnic groups; greatest increase was observed among those identifying as Black/African/Caribbean/Black British
- Across all ethnic groups the probability of a respondent reporting a longstanding illness affecting their mental health was twice as high among those who were food insecure compared to those who were food secure.



# Team & Key Partners

## Research Team:

Kate Pickett - University of York  
Laura Sheard - University of York  
Bob Doherty - University of York  
Claire Cameron - UCL, London  
Carol Dezateux - QMU, London  
Amir Sharif - University of Bradford  
Harry Rutter - University of Bath  
Wendy Burton - University of York  
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Ariadne Kapetanaki - University of York  
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Grace Gardner - University of York  
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Food & Rural Affairs



The Food  
Foundation



GENIUS  
School  
Food  
Network



We are family  
BORN IN BRADFORD

# Social Security Scrutinised

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[www.largerfamilies.study](http://www.largerfamilies.study)  
[www.changingrealities.org](http://www.changingrealities.org)

# Inadequacy of social security systems

- Systemic issues around benefit inadequacy; austerity era ‘reforms’; design issues with Universal Credit [in crisis before the crises]
- Shortcomings with packages of support provided during first pandemic and now cost of living crisis including; i) temporary nature; ii) flat rate payments; iii) refusal to dismantle problematic features of current regime (benefit cap, two-child limit; iv) underpinning narrative (on left and right).
- Policy approach embeds and entrenches insecurity (by design)



# Real-time evidence

The uncertainty around any benefits increase is deeply concerning and worrying. **I have simply come to the end of any cutbacks I can make.** As someone living on legacy benefits that has not seen any increase in recent years, the current situation is having a severe impact the the mental and physical health of both my daughter and myself. **We are now living in the dark, unable to buy washing powder to wash our clothes & surviving on very basic food that does not need cooking if possible.** Without a proper increase in line with living costs I don't know how we are going to get through. (Erik W)



# Real-time evidence

I have just tried to draught proof our lounge with a roll of bubble wrap. Filled in holes in the gas meter cupboard that had a breeze blowing through and covered the letterbox. I hope it will be a bit less cold in there now. The **forecast is below freezing day and night several times next week which I am dreading.** (Lili K, 3rd December)



# Real-time evidence

I know it sounds daft saying you don't have that extra possibly £100 a month or whatever it would be, if you got it for another child, it makes a big difference...my little one'll be like "Oh can we go to shop?" And it's like "No, we've got stuff at home." But now we really don't have stuff at home, you know what I mean?...**I'm obviously at home on my own and I'm sat in the living room and I've got a blanket over me, there's no heating on because I don't see the point; it's cold and my coat's wet, and me trainers, so they could do with drying, but I don't want to put it on and heat the whole house just to dry my coat and trainers, do you know what I mean?**

(Angela, single mum, three children, affected by the two-child limit)



# Brief reflections

- The extent and nature of contemporary crisis/es should not detract from endemic, everyday crisis that households face (and have for some time)
- We need to be alive to the dangers of the fragmentation of poverty, combined with the institutionalisation of charitable support (especially as regards design of policy solutions)
- Those with lived experiences have a unique and vital contribution to make in building the case for a decent and compassionate social security system, on which we can all depend.





# The urgent call for change

**Christmas is fast approaching! It was tough during the pandemic but this year with the rising cost of living it is going to be the toughest yet.** As a single parent living on legacy benefits alone I can hardly afford to feed the two of us basic everyday food and essentials. So this year there is no option but to **go without a traditional christmas meal and stick to something quick and easy to cook to avoid using too much electricity.** As for presents there will be a few basic items of clothing and toiletries for my daughter as there is no money for anything more. Then there is a christmas tree that will no longer twinkle with lights, so this year will be very plain and simple for us but we will try to make the most of what we do have. I know there are millions of families that will be living like this or even worse but until there is real change in society and the governments help for people in these situations, not due to their own fault but due to unforeseen circumstances or ill health this is all we can do. **To all families living in these unacceptable conditions we will be thinking of you all and wish you a happy christmas. Make the most of what you do have as change and fairness are surely not too far away.** (Erik, 1 December)





# Pressures on mental health

Professor Kate Pickett  
Department of Health Sciences  
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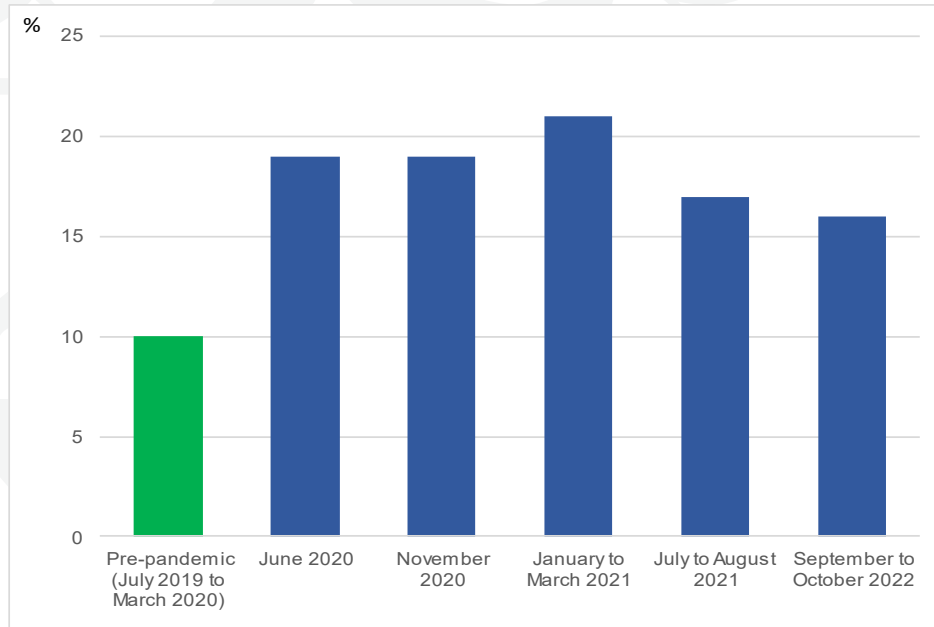
# The mental health pandemic

- World Health Organisation ranks depression as the leading cause of ill health and disability worldwide
  - in 2017, 300 million+ living with depression
  - Precipitous increase since 2005
- As a very unequal country, UK has a high prevalence of mental ill health, 1 in 5 adults
- In Bradford, a doubling of clinical rates of depression among mothers during Covid





# Mental health and the cost of living crisis (ONS data)



- 1 in 6 (15%) with clinical levels of depression
- High rates:
  - Long-term sickness
  - Carers
  - Disabilities
  - Most deprived areas
  - Young adults
  - Women



# Money and Mental Health Policy Institute report

- More than half of UK adults felt anxious, depressed, filled with dread or unable to cope **due to worries about finances**
- One in six (17%) with suicidal thoughts, half (49%) among those in debt
- Repeated contact by creditors triggering suicidal thoughts
- Calling for action to reduce pressure on those who have fallen behind on payments





# The Changing Cost of Living Survey

- How people's mental health changes *in real time* as their financial circumstances change.
- September 2022 → 250 people in UK & 250 in France

	Sep	Oct	Nov
Managing financially			
Quite difficult	113 (46.1%)	119 (50.6%)	105 (46.3%)
Very difficult	40 (16.3%)	39 (16.6%)	42 (18.5%)
Clinical depression	53 (22.4%)	53 (22.6%)	46 (20.3%)
Clinical anxiety	53 (22.4%)	53 (22.6%)	46 (20.3%)



## Through the winter...

- Key question: do depression and anxiety increase as income goes down:
  - Are higher incomes generally associated with lower depression & anxiety scores
  - For individuals, do their anxiety and depression scores improve as their personal income increases

<https://rpubs.com/danielnettle/ccol>





# The York Cost of Living Research Group

For news, events, blogs:

<https://www.york.ac.uk/policy-engine/cost-of-living/>

- Follow some of us on Twitter:
  - [@ProfKEPickett](#) - Professor Kate Pickett
  - [@ProfJBradshaw](#) - Emeritus Professor Jonathan Bradshaw
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