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**Household Strategies in a Yorkshire Mining Village**

**By:**

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# 1.0 Introduction

Pinpointing the genesis of a piece of work can sometimes be difficult. In this case, this research draws on a half a lifetime's work in economic development and regeneration. The point at which the niggling set of questions arose that became this thesis was quite specific however. It dates to one day in the 2003, when the researcher was managing Wakefield Council's community-based economic development service, a disparate range of activities encompassing managed workspace, business development, social enterprise support and employment programmes, delivered using funding from a wide range of sources - European Social and Regional Development Funds, the Coalfield Regeneration Trust, the Single Regeneration Budget and the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund.

Life was good, a local economy that had been badly affected by colliery closures and other job losses in the previous decade was creating jobs, and private sector investment was creating new houses in colliery villages which had been written off in previous decades. It was a sunny summer day in 2003 in the village named as Ballyhenry in this study, and there was a positive story to tell, which the researcher was sharing with visiting staff from the UK Government's Social Exclusion Unit, led by the Unit's Deputy Director, at that stage undertaking the study that was to become the report 'Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas' the following year (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004).

They had been taken to Ballyhenry and were being shown a newly opened community-run leisure facility; an adult education and training facility in a local community building and newly built private sector housing all of which were enhancing the vitality of the village. Looking across the recreation grounds towards those new houses, the

researcher highlighted how economic growth, private sector housing development and social investment were making the community more viable. The visitors were interested, as much of the existing fact-finding had focussed very much on different approaches such as greater investment in public sector housing; and in addition Wakefield's employment figures were improving to a greater degree than other adjacent areas in South Yorkshire at that stage.

The researcher endeavoured to get the important points across. The need, for example, to tailor education and training provision to individuals and communities, and for some dismantling of the centralised bureaucracy that was (and still is) the Department for Work and Pensions; for investment in new community facilities to be viable in the long term<sup>1</sup>; and for a recognition of changing aspirations in mining communities towards home ownership and jobs beyond the immediate locality. There was also an honest recognition that how mining communities such as Ballyhenry would change could not be predicted.

In particular it remained to be seen how local people and households would engage with a changing and developing economy. A number of unanswered questions remained. Who were the new residents? How would the individuals and households living in the village live, both those living in new housing and existing residents? Where were their incomes going to come from, and indeed what would be the balance between reliance on paid-for services or self-help, mutual aid or favours between friends and family? How did village residents dependent on benefits get by? Was there a cash-in-hand economy keeping these households afloat? Neighbourhood statistics could shed a partial light on

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<sup>1</sup> Both the community facilities discussed are still operating, and one of the participants in the research works in both of them. Other facilities developed in the village in the New Labour period - the village's Surestart Centre, and a gym attached to a new community health facility have closed.

some of these questions, but not on others. In particular they could not reveal granular detail on the working lives of individuals and households, and how different demands and needs were balanced. Neither could they reveal the extent of informal economic activity. Along with colleagues, the researcher had a hunch that it was there, but as professionals at one remove from communities, whilst individual activities might be revealed - the sale of black market tobacco, car repairs outside houses or heavy reliance on families for childcare - it was difficult to gain an overall picture. Some work undertaken with the local enterprise agency had targetted businesses operating informally, and had shown the need for business support to help them move to fully on-the-books trading.

As part of his work, the researcher also sat on a practitioner reference group that advised the Social Exclusion Unit as it prepared the report. Originally, it was envisaged that this would also be informed by research on the informal economy in disadvantaged areas being carried out by Melvyn Evans and Steven Syrett at Middlesex University, and Colin Williams at Sheffield University. The conclusions of this research were felt to be controversial by the-then Deputy Prime Minister, John Prescott, and they were not published in the main report; being published with limited publicity in a separate report later (Evans, Syrett, & Williams, 2006). However, the fact that the official report did not cover these issues merely served to whet the researchers appetite to find out more; an opportunity which came about when they were made redundant by the-then Homes and Communities Agency (now Homes England) in 2012.

The story of how the research was carried through in practice will be covered in more detail in the Literature Review and Methods and Methodology chapters. However, this

work draws heavily on the insights of Ray Pahl's Divisions of Labour, an examination of household work strategies on the Isle of Sheppey, based on extensive fieldwork conducted in the late 1970's (R. E. Pahl, 1984). It has shaped most subsequent research into household work strategies and the informal economy in the UK since, and the material has been revisited subsequently by some of the original researchers (Charles & Crow, 2012; Lyon & Crow, 2012; Lyon, Morgan Brett, & Crow, 2012). It has also been the subject of a reflection by Crow et al. who address the value of Pahl's approach in researching the effects of the post-2007 recession (Crow, Hatton, Lyon, & Strangleman, 2009). They restate Pahl's wider questions in the Sheppey study. These were *'How have we come to be where we are currently?'*; *'Who gets what?'*; *'How do we know what we claim to know?'*, and *'What sorts of lessons can be drawn to inform thinking about the future?'*, and whilst these are not the research questions adopted for this study, they are useful in shaping the its context and will be revisited in the discussion and conclusion chapters.

Turning to coalfield communities specifically, it is clear that the last five decades have seen unprecedented change in the coalfield settlements of Great Britain<sup>2</sup>. Towns and villages which grew in response to the development of the industry in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries have experienced, as Peter Hetherington (for many years the northern editor of the Guardian) suggests, a process of de-industrialisation unprecedented in a major developed economy (Hetherington, 2014). This process of change accelerated after the Miners Strike of 1984-1985, and the pit closure programme that followed in the 1980's and 1990's. Initially, mining communities were the focus of

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<sup>2</sup> Ireland had some very limited coal-mining activity, in Counties Antrim, Tyrone, Kilkenny, Tipperary and Roscommon, with the last Irish coal-mine at Arigna, Co.Roscommon closing in 1990. However, unlike Scotland, Wales and England, coal-mining was never an important industrial activity in Ireland. The term 'Great Britain' is therefore used consciously and deliberately.

considerable academic interest in this period, but in the period since 2000, this focus has ebbed; particularly research and writing which examines the lives of communities and individuals.

This piece of empirical research is an attempt to address this gap, looking at life and work within one Yorkshire mining community at the most basic level, that of the household, building on previous research on household strategies in both coalfield communities and elsewhere. Seventeen interviews with local households are at the centre of the research, supported by extensive desk-based research and the evaluation of relevant literature. This was augmented by the researcher's prior knowledge and experience gained in twenty years of working in economic development and regeneration for Wakefield Council, the local authority area within which the village is situated.

The interviews focussed on the various ways in which these households met their needs, through both formal and informal economic activity, using a framework initially developed by Pahl for research on the Isle of Sheppey in the late 1970's (Pahl, 1984), and subsequently used by other researchers such as Warde, Williams and White (Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993; White, 2006; Williams, 2004; Williams, 2004; Williams & Windebank, 1999). This framework allows both a detailed and granular consideration of household activity, as well as the balance between formal and informal economic activity and the gradations between them.

In a village where the last local collieries shut in 1993, much has changed in terms of working patterns and household and community life. Like many mining villages, the

community has experienced new housing construction, and most of the households interviewed had moved into the village from outside, some from other nearby communities, and others from further afield. The experience of these incomers is a central element of the research, and the evidence and analysis constitute a significant addition to existing knowledge, both on former mining communities, but also the experience of in-migrants in an existing community.

Following some context-setting discussion of definitions, the literature on the four key underlying contextual elements for the study are examined. The first element is the literature on the informal economy, and specifically key UK research on this topic. Although the focus of this study is empirical, and presents conclusions drawn from empirical research, theoretical frameworks which have informed previous studies in this field are discussed. The second key element, is the research on what are variously described as household strategies and household work strategies, and this is discussed, with middle-level theory from this literature being identified. The third element is the literature on coalfield communities, which is also discussed, along with economic development literature with a particular focus on former industrial areas. Finally this is related to a fourth element of key literature, that on worklessness and disadvantaged communities, and a set of research questions are outlined.

How these research questions were answered is the focus of a chapter on methodology, methods and the research process. The research questions are:

1. What work strategies are used by households to meet their needs in a former mining village in Yorkshire?

2. Why are these work strategies adopted by households?
  
3. What can a study of these strategies add to existing studies of, and policy towards, household work strategies?

Developing a set of methods which will answer them involves a consideration of previous research approaches in the field, which used quantitative, qualitative and mixed methods approaches. A case study approach using qualitative methods is outlined, and the consideration which shaped both the overall research plan as well as the details of interview schedules is set out.

This is followed by a short discussion of the village context of the study, looking at key socio-economic data as well as the village's location and history. Then the research's key findings and analysis are presented. Whilst previous studies of household strategies have focussed on a range of activities, the current research was dominated by the concerns of respondents about work and work-life balance, as well as the question of care, aspects of which were a major discussion area in most of the interviews. This represents a departure from previous research, with activities which had been a significant focus of previous research such as home improvements, home repairs and car repairs increasingly obtained within the mainstream, commoditised economy. The findings are then discussed, and related once more to the wider literature.



The study represents the first field research focussed on household strategies in disadvantaged areas in the UK since the work of White, published in 2006. Whilst other research has focussed on individual topics - care, work-life balance, disadvantage, and access to services - which are considered as one element in household strategies within the current study; it will be argued that the integrative nature of the household strategy adds an extra dimension to other work. This is particularly the case given the strong focus within this study on the impact of space on household strategies, considering not just the local environment of the village, but also the wider implications of transport networks and the allocation of land for housing.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 Introduction

This literature review is a reflection of a research journey, drawing on its three overlapping stages. First, there is a short discussion of the reading that shaped the decision to pursue doctoral research into household work strategies in a Yorkshire mining village. Second, the literature that moved this aspiration to undertake research into a set of research questions and a methodological approach is outlined. Finally, there is a discussion of the literature which has been used as part of the process of sense-making and analysis during and after the research process.

This third stage was important. Remarks originally attributed to Keynes are now recognised as apocryphal;

*‘When the facts change, I change my mind. What do you do, sir?’*

Nevertheless, the sentiment addresses a truism of the research process, and are an appropriate description of what happened in this case. A research approach was devised, and there were broad expectations of what that process would deliver. These were partly confirmed, but they were also augmented significantly by a series of interviews which generated new and unexpected material. All three of these stages need to be

reflected in the literature review, as well as in the consideration of methods and methodologies.

The examination of the literature on household work strategies and their use (or non-use) of the informal economy will place the study in a wider context of scholarship, as well as highlighting the key policy issues which bear on the subject. Through doing this, gaps in existing knowledge will be identified, and will form the basis for a series of research questions which will address these gaps. First, however, the study will address the question of definitions, as there are a number of terms which need clarification.

The review will then move to an examination of the key literature on key wider themes which bear on household work strategies. This will be done in two parts, considering first the elements of household work strategies, and then their context. In the first part the first area of scrutiny is the informal economy, and the key relevant literature on it; in particular in a UK context. The second is the question of household work strategies, and the needs which households attempt to meet through the strategies they adopt. This necessarily requires a discussion of a third topic, the linked questions of housework and consumption and related issues of how families and households evolve or determine the strategies they use; and the degree to which this reflects relations of power and gender. The next question relates to a specific activity which is a growing focus of household strategies, that of care.

In the second part of this examination of themes, the first contextual issue relates to the coalfield communities and their history, followed by the wider economy, and how it shapes household strategies. The question of community is also important - both its

presence and absence and is considered, followed by a discussion of poverty and disadvantage. Finally, the question of space and spatial context is explored.

Finally, the review moves from the general to the particular, specifically an examination of the geographical context for the study, the former mining communities of Britain's major coalfields in Yorkshire, Nottinghamshire and Derbyshire. In particular, the extent to which recent research and policy has explored the internal dynamics of the economies of coalfield communities is examined. Finally, how these topics link with the literature on poverty and disadvantaged communities in contemporary Britain will be reviewed. As this literature is extensive, the focus will be on recent research with a bearing on communities of the kind on which the study focuses.

## 2.2 Context: Initial Curiosity

Research is not undertaken in a vacuum. For any researcher, self-knowledge is important, specifically an understanding of why they think the way they do, and why certain things are important to them. Small things can have surprising impacts - for this researcher, 'A' Level studies and a first degree in History and Archaeology still shape views on how scholarship should be shared with those whose taxes pay for it. An early acquaintance with the work of G.R. Elton on the Tudor constitution (Elton, 1960), J.P. Kenyon and Christopher Hill on the Stuarts (Hill, 1972; Kenyon, 1969), or Runciman on the Crusades (Runciman, 1951a, 1951b, 1957), still shapes a view of what writing should look like - clear, lucid, simple, and engaging in theoretical abstraction only where necessary, following the dictum of Marshall in relation to mathematics in economics<sup>3</sup> (Thoma, 2006). This study is primarily an empirical study, and the approach and the literature reviewed reflects this.

Prior work, study and reading is important, and need disentangling. The researcher had a career of more than twenty years working for local authorities in regeneration and economic development, mainly in the Wakefield district; along with thirteen years in local politics representing mainly white working-class communities in South Leeds. During this period, the researcher regarded himself as a reflective practitioner, and was often regarded as such by others. Sense-making - whether about understanding the

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<sup>3</sup> Thoma quotes Marshall - '[I had] a growing feeling in the later years of my work at the subject that a good mathematical theorem dealing with economic hypotheses was very unlikely to be good economics: and I went more and more on the rules - (1) Use mathematics as a shorthand language, rather than an engine of inquiry. (2) Keep to them till you have done. (3) Translate into English. (4) Then illustrate by examples that are important in real life. (5) Burn the mathematics. (6) If you can't succeed in (4), burn (3). This last I did often.'

economic and social forces bearing on communities, or the potential solutions to their problems - was an important adjunct of working life. So too was making sense of the wider political context in which this work took place, as an engaged Labour activist confronting the long wilderness years of Conservative government that coincided with the journey from 'A' Levels in the North of Ireland to late-thirties fatherhood; followed by sleepless nights and a mid-forties Masters in the Blair years.

A number of thinkers shaped the author's political thinking - particularly a Gramscian analysis of political, economic, social and cultural forces, which drew on both the Selected Political Writings and the Prison Notebooks (Gramsci, 1973; Gramsci & Hoare, 1978), as well as some of the work of his interpreters such as Anne Showstack Sassoon and Roger Simon (Sassoon, 1982; Simon, 1982), and augmented by the road-map of what it meant to be a Gramscian in the 1980's and 1990's drawn from Jaggi's Red Bologna (Jäggi, 1977), and the pages of *Marxism Today*<sup>4</sup>. In a sense, this was about literature as part of an intellectual toolkit that helped answer questions as they arose.

At the same time, a need was perceived to make sense of the Labour Party which was both the focus of the researcher's political activism<sup>5</sup>, as well as being an enduring presence in his work for three Labour local authorities. That sense-making was shaped by two magisterial pieces of research by Lewis Minkin, *The Labour Party Conference* and *The Contentious Alliance* (Minkin, 1980, 1992), huge, elegantly-written, and replete with empirical information drawn from decades of observation, reading and interviewing. At the same time as providing a road-map, answering day-to-day questions facing a political activist in Labour, such as '*Why does this Party affiliate behave in this way?*' or

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<sup>4</sup> The researcher was a subscriber from 1982 until the publication's demise in 1991.

<sup>5</sup> The researcher joined the Labour Party in 1981, and remains a member currently.

*'What do Trade Unions actually want?' or 'How are decisions made?'* they also constitute the product of a research journey whose end-product is one of the more significant achievements in post-war UK social science. Minkin's thinking on methodology and research, articulated in his book *'Exits and Entrances, Political Research as a Creative Art'* also shaped the researcher's thinking on the research process (Minkin, 1997); and this will be discussed in the next chapter. Minkin's approach to writing, concentrating on empirical data, driven by narrative and with theoretical generalisation only where it complements and explains the narrative is a model the researcher considers an ideal to be aspired to.

This approach to writing, which does not spurn anecdote or apparent digression, is also powerfully demonstrated in Siegfried Kracauer's *'The Salaried Masses: Duty and Distraction in Weimar Germany'* (Kracauer, 1998). At one level this short work - written initially as journalism for the *Frankfurter Zeitung* - is a rich description of white-collar life in Weimar Germany. With even a minimal application of the lens of hindsight, it also powerfully reveals the seething undercurrents of betrayal, disappointment, corruption and resentment in Post-Versailles Germany. With the lens shifted, it also has the power to illuminate an angry and resentful contemporary Britain.

Whilst Marx, Marxism and the Marxist tradition also informed the researcher's views about historical change and the role of class, at a personal level this always came up against the lived experience of Marxism, either as an observer of Marxist states, or through acquaintance with Britain's Marxist sects. Wariness was compounded by a recognition that whilst Marx's analysis of capitalism was a powerful one, his writing did not constitute a programme for action. This wariness found further shape after reading

Anthony Polan's 'Lenin and The End of Politics' (Polan, 1984), with its powerful arguments for pluralism, and against the absolutism of Marx and his Leninist interpreters.

Beyond understanding political context, there was also a need to understand the economic context within which the researcher worked, especially after starting a Masters in 2004. Until then, much key reading was drawn on in response to particular needs as they arose, using think-tanks such as the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) and the Coalfield Community Campaign in the UK, and the Brookings Institution in the United States, as well as drawing on research relationships with local higher educational institutions. Standing back from practice and reflecting more widely necessitated a different approach, as well as a route into the subject.

Serendipity delivered the work of the British economist, Geoff Hodgson, whose writing moved from a critical Marxism in the late 1970's and early 1980's into a sustained advocacy of Veblenian institutional economics in the 1990's. Hodgson's earlier work had been a presence in the researcher's political sense-making through works such as 'Trotsky and Fatalistic Marxism', a polemic against determinist interpretations of Marx's theories on the tendency of the rate of profit to fall (Hodgson, 1975); or 'Socialism and Parliamentary Democracy' a reflection on the importance of parliamentary activity for revolutionary socialists (Hodgson, 1977).

By 2004, neither the researcher nor Hodgson were revolutionary socialists, and Hodgson's 'Economics and Utopia' answered many of the questions which the researcher



had about the contemporary economy and the way that it worked (Hodgson, 1999). This was augmented by Hodgson's other explorations of the waxing and waning of Veblenian institutionalism, and its links to the German historical school (Hodgson, 2001, 2004). Both his arguments for the importance of an understanding of the impact of institutions on economies; and his assertion that the interaction of institutions, societies and economies are specific to their time and space are an underlying assumption of the current study.

In this connection, Hodgson's championing of the idea of evolution in the Darwinian sense as a process which applies to the development of societies is particularly important, a view echoed by Breslin (Breslin, 2010; Hodgson & Knudsen, 2012), as is his willingness to use the word habit to describe actions rooted in instinctive propensities, which in turn shape the nature of institutions. Whilst recognising that Bourdieu's re-introduction of the term 'habitus' to sociology had some value as a term that describes aspects of habit, though shorn of grounding in instinctive propensities and human biology, Hodgson contends:

*'The next step for modern sociology is to look beyond the pretentious wordage, recognise the concept of habit for what it is, locate its classical formulation in the pragmatism of Dewey and others, and rediscover the old sociological wisdom that humans are biological as well as social beings.'* (Hodgson, 2001: 293)

This perspective was also reinforced by the work of other leading scholars in the institutionalist tradition, Ha-Joon Chang and Ilene Grabel, in their identification of

different paths of capitalist development and different approaches to state intervention between East Asian economies and the Anglo-Saxon countries (Chang & Grabel, 2004). In turn, their conclusions on the specific nature of some economies are also reinforced in the work of scholars in the Keynesian tradition, such as Beatty and Fothergill in their work on former industrial areas (Beatty & Fothergill, 1996; Beatty, Fothergill, & Powell, 2005).

A developing role in regeneration which encompassed the fields of training, employment, economic development as well as contributing to physical regeneration activities also necessitated deeper reflection; along with studies at Masters level. Were the approaches adopted under the New Labour government actually achieving meaningful change? Were the policy, programme and project choices the most effective use of resources? Institutional critiques showed how certain solutions - such as 'grand projects' shaped in response to the Rogers Review (Rogers, 1999), and Yorkshire Forward's Urban Renaissance programme<sup>6</sup> - had institutional heft and weight in an environment largely shaped by the disciplines of town planning, and driven by both the imperatives of the property industry, as well as the desire of local politicians to be seen to be doing things. Were they, however, the best way of addressing economic underperformance and creating opportunity? A review of the literature on policy and programme evaluation as part of a Masters Dissertation was the necessary corrective, introducing both realism and Realism into the researcher's thinking.

For the regeneration professionals, Pawson and Tilley's work on evaluation could have made uncomfortable reading (Pawson, 2006; Pawson & Tilley, 1997). The tests (and the

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<sup>6</sup> Yorkshire Forward's Urban Renaissance experience is summarised usefully by McDonnell and Newby (McDonnell & Newby, 2011).

expectations of outcomes) applied to programmes for substance abusers or smoking cessation costing relatively little were far more rigorous than those applied to a new art gallery costing millions; and whilst the researcher valued the clinical governance tests required in joint working with the National Health Service on work with vulnerable individuals, others approached this with trepidation. As well as Pawson and Tilley, the work of the American policy scholar Frank Fischer also shaped and continues to shape the researcher's perspectives on the interaction of policy, programmes and the lived experience of communities (Fischer, 1999, 2003).

Given a work environment shaped by the prevailing edifice complex, the corrective applied by Bent Flyvbjerg in his examination of the politics of a pedestrianisation in Aarhus, 'Rationality and Power' (Flyvbjerg, 1998), also helped in the exercise of sense-making; a process also supported by his arguments for a phronetic social science in 'Making Social Science Matter' (Flyvbjerg, 2001). For the researcher the perspectives of Pawson and Tilley, Fischer and Flyvbjerg are critical in the process of sense-making; with the institutionalism of Hodgson providing further framing. Crucially, for an ex-practitioner seeking to share research in an accessible form with those who pay for it, they also provide, like Minkin or Kracauer (and Pahl), a model of how to write and what to write about.

To conclude, this researcher's position is that the research journey needs to be seen in the context of a much longer intellectual journey. This is as important in understanding as the separate discussion elsewhere on how the researcher's work experience shaped the drive to research in this field. It is the researcher's view that research needs to be

democratic in character, and that its accessibility to a range of readers is a fundamental principle. In an era when PhD theses are accessible on the internet, they can and should be framed and written in terms that do not deter a non-academic audience. Having clarified this question, this review of the literature will move to questions of definition.

## 2.3 Questions of Definition

### 2.3.1 Introduction

Before looking at the elements of household work strategies it is important to answer some questions of definition, recognising those definitions are subject to controversy and disagreement amongst scholars. Indeed, the term 'household work strategy' is not an uncontroversial one, with sporadic disagreement since it was first used in the 1980's by Pahl, focusing on what Pahl did or did not imply about structure and agency through the use of the word 'strategy'. This section therefore recognises that definitions are invariably the subject of debate and discussion, and as part of the process of definition, outlines these different views.

The section focuses on three topics. The first two were identified as germane to the study at an early stage, when it was first conceived - the *informal economy* and *household work strategies* - with a discussion of the third, *social capital*, arising as a potential requirement during a review of the literature, and becoming inevitable during

the process of fieldwork and analysis. The range of phenomena grouped within the generally loosely-defined topic of social capital continued to recur; and understanding the field became increasingly important.

Social capital is a problematic term, which includes phenomena which have been described in different ways by social scientists from a range of disciplines and traditions over a century and a half. The broadness of the term, the imprecision with which it is used and its universality as a panacea can all cause irritation. In the researcher's case, that mild irritation arises from having to deal professionally with voluntary-sector supplicants, emboldened by a cursory reading of Putnam's 'Bowling Alone', highlighting the sunlit vistas of enhanced 'social capital' that would follow an award of funding for their organisation. Lenin's dictum in the second chapter of '*What is to be done?*' that:

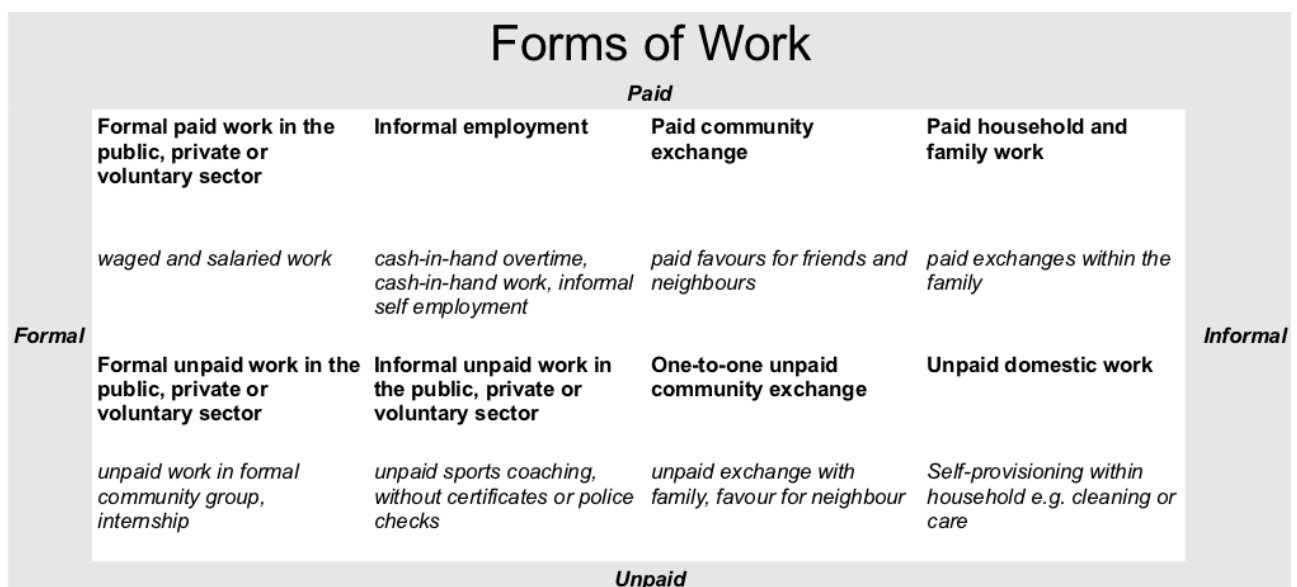
*'the history of all countries demonstrates that the working-class exclusively by its own efforts is able to develop only trade-union consciousness (Lenin, 1999)'*

can equally apply to bourgeois advocates of community development and social capital, blithely unaware that they are also advocating their own objective economic interests. Prolonged exposure can turn anyone into a hard-bitten Virginia-School cynic. Similarly it is pointless to wish that the key advocates of the term - Bourdieu, Putnam and Portes - had engaged more fully with nineteenth and early twentieth century American institutionalism. They didn't. Social capital is a widely-used shorthand, and although problematic, has potential utility as a framing tool.

The other fields - the informal economy and household work strategies are less problematic, although there is debate on the full scope of the informal economy, and whether the description of the aggregate of a household's work practices as a strategy is

appropriate. Whilst internationally a wide range of studies focus on the informal economy as a free-standing area of enquiry (Gërxhani, 2004), the focus of this doctoral study is on informal economic activity as one element of household work strategies, following the approach of authors such as Pahl, Leonard, Wallace, Warde, White, Williams and Windebank (Leonard, 1994, 1998, 2000; Pahl, 1984; Wallace, 2002; Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993; White, 2006; Williams & Windebank, 2000b). These inter-relations of informal and formal work have been described by White, and are shown at Figure 2.1.

**Figure 2.1 Forms of Work - after White (White, 2013)**



In the specific context which is being examined, informal activity is one element of household work strategies. Although Williams has highlighted the amount of informal activity and self-provisioning and the persistence of non-commoditised exchange in households (Williams, 2004; Williams, 2003a, 2005; Williams & Nadin, 2010b; Williams & Windebank, 2005; Williams, 2002; Williams & Windebank, 2003), many household needs

(utilities such as water, gas and electricity and the bulk of food shopping) are necessarily met in the formal economy in advanced industrial countries.

Hudson has also looked at the relationships and flows between the legal and illegal economies, and their relationships with economic geographies (Hudson, 2001). He conceptualises late-modern capitalist economies in terms of the spaces, circuits and flows which constitute them, but rejects the notion that recent phases of capitalist development have been marked by an enhanced '*culturalization*' (sic) of the economy, in which cultural factors are more important in shaping economies than underlying questions of power and capital. He also recognises that

*'...spaces of consumption, exchange and production are linked via a complex circuitry of flows and at the same time constitute the material and discursive spaces through which these flows can and must occur. Circuits, flows and spaces exist in relations of mutual determination, socially produced in historically-geographically variable ways.'* (Hudson, 2004: 466)

Although writing from a Marxian perspective, in this he recognises the importance of institutionalist perspectives, particularly those of the 'older' institutional economics of Polanyi and Veblen, as discussed at length by Hodgson (Hodgson, 1999); and highlights the impact of divergent views on research priorities between economic geographers working from cultural and political economy perspectives.

*'Culturalists tend to see political-economic geographers' choices of research foci as unnecessarily centred on the formal economy/production/markets (and indeed*

*certain industries) while political economists often see culturalists' research choices to be almost wilfully trivial (for example, car-boot sales, or local exchange and trading systems (LETS), which are certainly conceptually intriguing but hardly pivotal to contemporary capitalism).' (Hudson, 2004: 467)*

Having overseen the closure of a LETS scheme, this researcher concurs with that aspect of Hudson's assessment. Fine, in a discussion of social capital as a concept (Fine, 2001), suggests that the way in which scholars in other disciplines, through using the lens of social capital (or other forms of 'non-capital capital' such as cultural capital) give themselves permission to examine those elements of the economic that the dominant schools of 'mainstream' neoclassical economic thought allow them to, but at the same time allow their thinking to be colonised by neoclassical economics.

These may be legitimate concerns of economics, but in this analysis they are crumbs from the rich man's table; a bone thrown to sociologists, economic geographers or management scholars, while the 'real' work on the 'real' subjects - econometrics, derivatives, financial modelling - is done by the proper economists. This is an intellectual division of labour which has been powerfully criticised from within economics by scholars such as Fullbrook, Harcourt and Hodgson and Reinert (Fullbrook, 2004; Harcourt, 2010; Hodgson, 2007; Reinert, 2012).

At the same time, Hudson's assessment of the relationships between formal, informal and illegal economies is partial. His work with Bennett, Beynon, Hollywood, Strangleman and Townsend on coalfields and their regeneration, is based on substantial field and desk research (Beynon, Hollywood, & Hudson, 2004; Beynon, Hudson, & Strangleman, 2004;



Townsend & Hudson, 2005a, 2005b). In his examination of the relationships between formal and informal economies, and legal and illegal economic activity however, the references to key published desk, field and survey in these areas is very limited. In two published articles of 2014 and 2018 (Hudson, 2014; Hudson, 2018), for example, there are only two references to any work by Colin Williams, and that is to a jointly written research report with Melvyn Evans and Steven Syrett (Evans, Syrett, & Williams, 2006).

Williams is probably Europe's leading researcher on informal, off-the-books and illegal work, and their relation to informal economy. His work addresses these phenomena in Western and Eastern Europe, the Indian sub-continent and Latin America. In many books, reports for both the UK Government and the European Commission, and more than one hundred pieces of published work in peer-reviewed journals, either as sole author or with other scholars, Williams has assembled a very substantial body of work. To effectively ignore it, as Hudson does, is mystifying and raises some questions regarding the completeness of Hudson's assessment.

Similarly, whilst his Chicago-school influenced prescriptions are questionable, to ignore the influential work of De Soto, with its influences on both a number of South American governments as well as the World Bank is also mistaken (De Soto, 1989, 2001, 2002). Other authors are also ignored. Feige's influential work on informal work and tax evasion is also not referenced (Alford & Feige, 1989; Feige, 1981, 1990, 2012, 2016; Feige & Cebula, 2011; Feige & Urban, 2003; Feige, 1997), or other UK researchers on informal and illegal working such as Smith (Smith, 2015), Smith and McElwee (Smith & McElwee, 2011), Vershinina and Rodionova (Vershinina, Barrett, & Meyer, 2011; Vershinina & Rodionova, 2011), MacDonald (MacDonald, 1994), Jordan and Travers

(Jordan & Redley, 1994; Jordan & Travers, 1998), Leonard (Leonard, 1994), or notably, Pahl (Pahl, 1984). On the basis of Hudson's reference lists, the first-time reader could reasonably think that no-one has looked at informal or illegal working in the UK since Dick Hobbs (Hobbs, 1989).

Whilst Hudson's work has some value in gathering the conceptual background to considerations of illicit working, formality, informality, and illegality, it is hampered by the absence of clear definitions of what is meant by these terms as well as its partial engagement with the research evidence. In this, the thinking of Helper is particularly useful. She makes a strong case for fieldwork and field research as a tool in economics (Helper, 2000), something which is an important feature of her work on U.S. manufacturing, in particular in her work on re-shoring (Helper, 2008).

In part, this is a reflection of her place as a practical economist in the American institutionalist tradition able to transfer between senior roles in government and academia; reminiscent, although without the great man's self-publicity, of J.K. Galbraith's transitions between academic economics; managing wartime price controls; researching the impact of wartime strategic bombing; and acting as U.S. Ambassador to India in the 1960's. Interdisciplinary working of this nature with a strong empirical foundation also reflects the New Economic Sociology of Granovetter and Swedberg (Granovetter, 1985; Swedberg, 1997), with some economists rejecting the divides between economics and sociology created by Talcott Parsons' prejudices against institutional economics, described by Hodgson, Peck and Velthuis (Hodgson, 2002b; Peck, 2004; Velthuis, 1999).

### 2.3.2 Defining the Informal Economy

The term 'Informal economy' entered the social science lexicon in the early 1970's with the publication of research in Ghanaian cities by the British social anthropologist, Keith Hart (Hart, 1973). His central question was how, in the context of shrinking opportunities and wages in the waged sector, migrants survived in cities. For many, the answer was small-scale entrepreneurship and trading, often supplementing waged employment.

Hart saw the sector as characterised by self-employment, sometimes alongside formal waged labour, whilst International Labour Organisation research saw potential for employment and economic development (Bangasser, 2000; Haan, 2005). Other work saw the informal sector as a consequence of regulation in the 'official' economy, and the inability of the poor to enforce property rights. The Peruvian neo-liberal economist Hernando De Soto is a key advocate of this approach, which has also been supported in the past by the World Bank (De Soto, 1989; Kaufmann & Kaliberda, 1996).

The definitional difficulties hinge on a number of questions. First, does the informal economy include criminal activity such as theft, prostitution or drug-dealing? A large majority of authors suggest not (Losby et al., 2002; Pahl, 1984; Samers, 2005; Williams, 2006c), but some historical analyses highlight the blurred lines between the merely illegal and the criminal (Hobbs, 1989; White, 1979). A minority of recent informal economy researchers also include activities which are illegal such as smuggling and drug-dealing (Bruns, Miggelbrink, & Müller, 2011; Venkatesh, 2006).

Second, does the informal economy include waged work as well as self-employment? In most studies informal employment and informal business activity are seen as

manifestations of a wider informal economic sector (Copisarow & Barbour, 2004; Katungi, Neale, & Barbour, 2006; Williams, 2006c, 2006a). Finally, does the informal economy encompass all work? Some authors such as Pedersen exclude work in the home, and activities which are undertaken on the basis of mutual aid or gift exchange (Pedersen, 2003). Others take a wider view, including the whole range of economic activity which takes place in a household or community (Pahl, 1984; Warde, 1990; Williams & Windebank, 2000a).

The proposed study adopts the latter approach and looks at the whole range of household activity. As Lee suggests, the distinction between the 'economic' and the 'non-economic' is not self-evident (Lee, 2006; Losby et al., 2002; Pahl, 1984; Samers, 2005; Williams & Windebank, 2005). The definition used in the study will be the European Union definition - namely

*'paid production and sale of goods and services that are unregistered for tax, social security and labour law purposes, but which are otherwise legal'*  
(European Union, 1998)

### **2.3.3 Defining Household Work Strategies**

In formal academic terminology, applying the term *household work strategy* to the processes by which households set and implement priorities to meet their needs begins with the work of Ray Pahl in the early 1980's (Pahl, 1984). His use of the word 'strategy' was not uncontroversial, a discussion which will be examined later in this section.

Pahl defines a household work strategy as:

*'...how households allocate their collective effort to getting all the work done that they define has, or they feel needs to be done...'* (Pahl, 1984: 113)

Therefore, household work strategies encompass the whole range of activities which the members of a household (the people living together in a dwelling) undertake to meet economic needs in the widest sense of the term.

Before discussing the appropriateness or otherwise of the use of the word 'strategy', it is also important to recognise the difference between *household work strategies* and *housework*. They are not the same thing, although Pahl's work, drawing on Oakley (Oakley, 1985) clearly asserts the importance of housework within household work strategies.

Housework is focussed on *the tasks associated with the day-to-day running of the house* - cleaning, cooking, laundry and other activities. It is the work that services other members of the household, as well as the whole process of organising and caring for a family. Although Oakley identified housework as a free-standing subject (Oakley, 1985), in this study it is placed in the context of a household work strategy.

Household strategies vary with time, geography, household composition and social class. Why these variations occur; and the respective roles of structure and agency, are at the heart of a number of the critical analyses of the household work strategy concept (G. Crow, 1989; Knights & Morgan, 1990). These authors argued that the term 'strategy'

implied a description of the household as a homogeneous unit, taking no account of internal power relationships, especially in terms of gender. For Knights and Morgan in particular, the term 'strategy' also had implicit meanings drawn from fields such as war studies and management studies, implying both a process of conscious deliberation and actors with agency. In a piece which was polemical in tone, Knights and Morgan argued that the concept of strategy needed to be subject to critical scrutiny (Knights & Morgan, 1990), although they were less clear on what could be substituted for a term they considered was freighted with adverse inferences.

Crow's was a wider discussion of strategy; arguing against what he saw as a prevailing structuralist approach, and examining the different uses of term at the level of societies and governments - for example strategies for economic development or growth; or its use in discussing questions of power, for example feminist strategies against oppression in economic life; capitalist strategies to control workers; or the strategies for survival and resistance used by Gypsies and Travellers identified by Okely (Okely, 1983: 29); or in households as the product of processes and conflicts taking place within them, which were not always democratic or consensual, but often individualistic, reflecting prevailing power relations. This view was reinforced by Morris, who argued that:

*'(a) households constitute an amalgam of often conflicting individual interests, and that (b) some of these interests, particularly as expressed through access to and control over household resources, are closely related to experience and/or behaviour in the labour market.'* (Morris, 1989: 449)

There was a risk, Crow argued, first, that household work strategies could be rooted in domestic conflict, and did not necessarily represent a 'household' strategy; second, that there was a risk that the degree of deliberation involved could be overestimated:

*'There is a very real danger when analysing household strategies of reading more calculation into the process whereby action is determined than is actually present.'* (Crow, 1989: 8)

In other words, strategies can be seen as a result of habit, learnt behaviour, or custom, and are shaped by the geographical and social milieu within which they are adopted. The relationship of strategy to questions of structure and agency is a vexed one, and in this connection it is useful to draw on the work of De Certeau and Bourdieu (Bourdieu, 1977; De Certeau, 1984). De Certeau defines strategies as:

*'the calculus of force-relationships which becomes possible when a subject of will and power (a proprietor, an enterprise, a city, a scientific institution) can be isolated from an environment.'* (De Certeau, 1984: xix)

to which he counterposes the concept of the tactic:

*'a calculus which cannot count on a "proper" (a spatial or institutional localization) nor thus on a borderline distinguishing the other as a visible totality.'* (De Certeau, 1984: xix)

He suggests strategies are both technocratic and scriptural, and offers some clarification on questions of structure and agency:

*'A tactic is determined by the absence of power just as a strategy is organized by the postulation of power.'* (De Certeau, 1984: 38)

Given this interpretation, it could be argued that what Pahl and others are actually discussing are household work 'tactics'. To Bourdieu, on the other hand, De Certeau ascribes a rather different, rather more commonplace and less instrumental view of strategies:

*'a strategy (for instance that used in marrying a child off) as the equivalent of 'taking a trick' in a card game...the postulates that determine the playing space and the rules, that accord a value to the deal and determine the players' options...'* (De Certeau, 1984: 53)

This view is reinforced by an examination of Bourdieu's discussion of strategies. In his discussion of Kabyllian marriage practice, for example, (Bourdieu, 1977: 62), he identifies inter-related fertility strategies, educative strategies, successional strategies, and strategies of agnates (males descended through the same male line) most of which derive from custom, and where the exercise of individual agency is limited. In this context, the degree to which the term strategy implies agency or otherwise is open to question. The arguments advanced by Crow and others are useful, in that they question some of the assumptions behind the use of the term 'strategy' but ultimately in



considering the phenomena we have to come to terms with the practical ways that the term 'household work strategy' or 'household strategy' are used in the literature.

Wallace and Warde argue for the usefulness of the term 'strategy' (Wallace, 2002; Warde, 1990). They suggest that the scope to examine the wide range of work done by household members, and how tasks are mediated, balanced and reconciled, is what makes the household work strategy concept especially valuable in a number of areas of enquiry. Using the term does not assume discussion, deliberation and agreement. As Wallace points out:

*'We should be aware that a household strategy does not necessarily mean that the members of the household either like each other or even talk to each other. Households could build strategies around strong internal antipathies but nevertheless organize (sic) the division of tasks and resources among the household members.'* (Wallace, 2002: 283)

Such considerations notwithstanding, the definition of household work strategy which will be used within this study draws from the definition already advanced (Pahl, 1984, p113), and includes the whole range of activities which a household undertake to meet their economic needs. Whilst the terms 'household work strategy', 'household strategy' and 'work strategy' are used interchangeably across the literature, for clarification, the term 'household strategy' will be used hereafter.

### 2.3.4 Defining Social Capital

As originally planned, this study did not focus on the question of social capital. The focus was on households and their strategies, and the primary concern was viewing work strategies through the lens of households. However, as the study proceeded, it became clear that both the presence and the absence of networks and relationships beyond the household had an effect on the shape of these strategies, and a consideration of the range of phenomena included in the catch-all term 'social capital' as it impacted on work strategies was essential. The field is a vexed and contested one, with even the existence of social capital as a discreet concept challenged in some quarters, but in defining it, particularly from the point of view of disadvantaged communities in the United Kingdom, the schema articulated by Forrest, Kearns and Flint in a number of papers in the first decade of this century is a useful one; and is outlined at Figure 2.2. Even if 'social capital' is not accepted as a legitimate term, the schema, with its focus on the different domains encompassed in the field of social capital is a useful one.

**Table 2.2 The Domains of Social Capital (After Forrest and Kearns) (Forrest & Kearns, 2001; Kearns and Flint, 2006; Flint & Kearns, 2006))**

Domain	Description	Local policies/impact
Empowerment	That people feel they are listened to; are involved in processes that affect them; can themselves take action to initiate changes.	Providing support to community groups, giving local people 'voice', helping to provide solutions to problems, giving local people a role in policy processes. Providing opportunities that help people to help themselves.
Participation	That people take part in social and community activities; local events occur and are well-attended.	Establishing and/or supporting local activities and local organisations, publicising local events.
Associational activity and common purpose	That people co-operate with each other through the formation of formal and informal groups to further their interests.	Developing and supporting networks between organisations in the area.
Supporting networks and reciprocity	That individuals and organisations co-operate to support one another for either mutual or one-side gain; and expectation that help would be given to or received from others when needed.	Creating, developing and/or supporting an ethos of co-operation between individuals and organisations which develop ideas of community support.
Collective norms and values	That people share common values and norms of behaviour.	Developing and promulgating an ethos which residents recognise and accept; securing harmonious social relations and promoting community interests.
Trust	That people feel they can trust their co-residents and local organisations responsible for governing or serving in their area.	Encouraging trust in residents in their relationships with each other; delivering on policy promises; bringing conflicting groups together.
Safety	That people feel safe in their neighbourhood and are not restricted in their use of public space by fear.	Encouraging a sense of safety in residents. Involvement in local crime prevention.
Belonging	That people feel connected to their co-residents, their home area, have a sense of belonging to the place and its people.	Creating, developing and/or supporting a sense of belonging in residents.

In the terms within which it is now generally understood within the social sciences and beyond, it is suggested that the term 'social capital' first appears in the work of the American educationist Lyda Hanifin in 1916. In his essay 'The Rural School Community Center' which focuses on his work in community education in West Virginia, he opens with a definition of what he describes as social capital:

*'In the use of the phrase social capital I make no reference to the usual acceptation of the term capital, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of a people, namely, good-will, fellowship, mutual sympathy and social intercourse among a group of individuals and families who make up a social unit, the rural community, whose logical center is the school.'* (Hanifan, 1916: 130)

With that simple statement Putnam suggests he launched what has become an area of huge academic interest and also a new less clearly focussed use of the word capital which now extends to such concepts as cultural capital, knowledge capital, reputational capital, symbolic capital or health capital amongst many others (Putnam, 2000). Farr argues that the roots of the concept owe more to the work of the American pragmatist scholar John Dewey (Farr, 2004), and draw from roots across 19<sup>th</sup> Century sociology and political economy.

One unifying characteristic of both Hanafin's and Putnam's work is that they do not describe something that would be recognised by economists as 'capital'. Marx and

Marshall used the term ‘social capital’, but meant something rather different by it (Marshall, 2013; Marx, 1996, 1997; Marx & Engels, 1999). For the founder of Neo-Classical economics, social capital represented what would now be described as the social economy as a component of the national economy, and for Marx social capital meant simply national aggregates of productive assets or wealth, with Marx defining social capital as:

*‘a definite social relation of production pertaining to a particular historical social formation, which simply takes the form of a thing and gives this thing a specific social character’ (Marx & Engels, 1999: 590)*

Hodgson suggests that in economic terms, capital has a number of unifying features (Hodgson, 2015). Use rights can be owned or hired; it has a market price; it can be used as collateral; it can be readily bought and sold; and it is measurable in the aggregate. Social capital, on the other hand as defined by Bourdieu is:

*‘the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized (sic) relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition’ (Bourdieu, 1986: 21)*

This, by Hodgson’s definition, is not actually capital. Portes suggests that Bourdieu’s definition is a more rigorous one than Putnam’s (Portes, 1998), which simply focusses on networks, norms and trust. Discussing both social capital and the related field of cultural

capital (Bourdieu, 1986), Bourdieu recognises, unlike Putnam, that to be valuable, social capital and cultural capital must be scarce.

If, for example, every child went to a fee-paying school and enjoyed regular trips to the theatre, the advantage that such children have currently by virtue of their cultural capital would no longer exist. The same would apply in a case where their social capital gave every household easy access to a large network of family and friends, all of whom were either plumbers, electricians or plasterers able to help with domestic jobs at cost price or below. In an economy based on money, the advantages of such a network would rapidly evaporate for both donors or recipients. As with the calculations over marriage strategies discussed in the previous section, social capital and cultural capital can be seen as 'tricks' to be played at critical points in a card-game to confer advantage on the player. They are not actually capital as such.

Fine outlines a series of further problems with social capital as a concept, arguing from the standpoint of Marxist scholarship (Fine, 2001), a set of conclusions also reinforced by Desan (Desan, 2013). He identifies its ready acceptance as an analytical, empirical and policy panacea by organisations such as the World Bank, which describe it in an imprecise vocabulary of 'missing links' and 'social glue'. Interestingly, Farr, in tracing the roots of Hanifan and Dewey's discussion of social capital in American Progressivism, highlights a historical pattern of social isolation, prejudice and rural poverty that confounds to a degree Putnam's nostalgic identification of a vanished idyll of caring communities that looked after each other. The concept's gargantuan appetite,

colonising a wide range of problematic topics across the social sciences, and its very fashionability, are also problematic.

He highlights the retreat of many social capital advocates from the more critical aspects of Bourdieu's contribution on the topic. This links to a further problem, also of retreat, but retreat from the knotty problems posed by postmodernism, towards an oversimplified 'real' which does not recognise that concepts are the products of their historic, social and cultural grounding. Fine suggests that it is complicit with mainstream economics, as practiced since the retreat from Keynesianism. It aids the process of reductionism by which this school of economic thinking isolates elements its models do not comprehend; and an eighth linked problem arises from its origins in the rational choice theory of scholars such as Gary Becker. Finally, he highlights its paradoxical attractiveness to theorists from beyond economics as an assault on economics, enabling a discussion of those aspects of economics they consider most important, but without the irksome task of engaging with the subject.

Its very universalist nature is at the heart of social capital's popularity as a concept, but at the same time is at the root of its weakness as a construct to examine social relations and how they bear on economic life. Like the theology of the Church of England, it accommodates all comers. Whilst recognising its currency, this study will approach the concept with a degree of Presbyterian circumspection, recognising that terms like network, family, household, community, norms and trust allow greater precision. In this context it is recognised, for example, that social networks, and the ability to call on them have economic impacts as highlighted by scholars such as Granovetter

(Granovetter, 1973, 1985, 2005). A feature of this study is the call some households make on social networks to get things done, although Williams highlights that people on lower incomes avoid social networks and organisations that they feel aren't for 'the likes of them', a conclusion also endorsed by Gosling researching women in the North East of England (Gosling, 2008; Williams, 2003b). This conclusion is also supported in other research by Boyce and Fletcher (Boyce, 2006; Fletcher, 2009).

## **2.4 Household Strategies: Understanding the Elements**

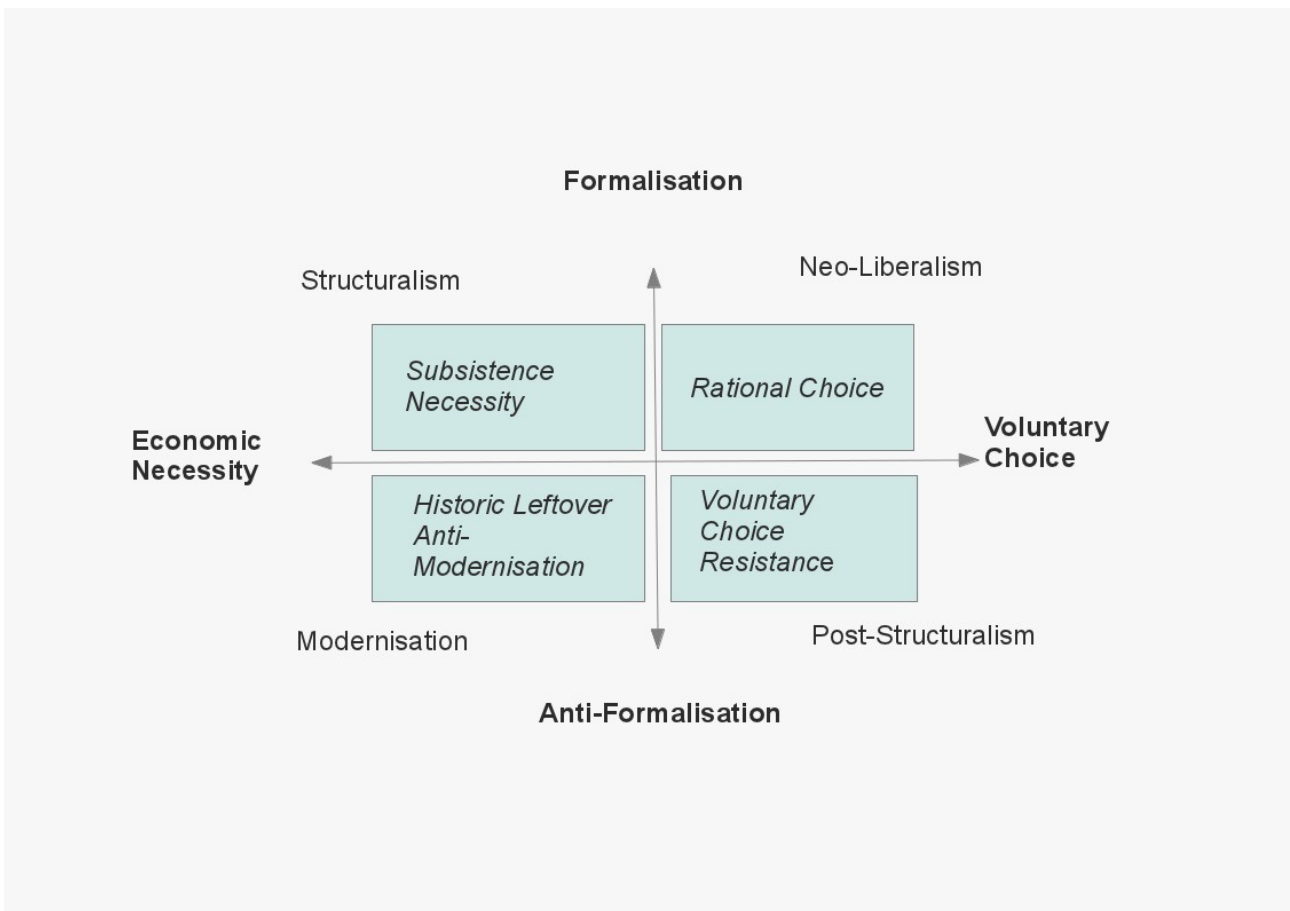
Having defined three key concepts - the informal economy, household work strategies and social capital, this section will now examine the building blocks or elements of household strategies, considered primarily with a UK context. This necessarily starts with an examination of the literature on the Informal Economy and Household Work Strategies, with a particular emphasis on the UK context, before considering a number of key elements of these strategies, households and housework, consumption, and care.

### **2.4.1 The Informal Economy**

Colin Williams, one of the most important scholars of the informal economy today, and definitely the most important writing in the English language, has identified four key strands of thinking about the informal economy - the modernisation thesis; neo-liberal interpretations and structuralist and post-structuralist approaches (Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.4 Theories of the Informal Economy (After Williams)<sup>7</sup>**



**Structuralist approaches** have historically seen participation in the informal economy as driven by necessity, not choice, and focussed on a goal of individual or family subsistence. With continuing economic development, as well as the development of legal and social frameworks those working in the informal economy will access opportunities in the formal economy. Structuralist analyses of the informal economy often argue for formalisation and measures to support formalisation (Katungi et al., 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Drawn from a number of discussions with Colin Williams, and his seminar presentation to Sheffield University's Centre for Research on the Informal Sector and Policy, 31<sup>st</sup> October 2013.

The modernisation thesis sees the continued existence of informal practices as an anachronism, the result either of uneven capitalist development or wilful anti-modernisation driven by traditional practices. Uneven capitalist development has been widely discussed, notably by Marx and Lenin (Lenin, 1965; Marx, 1977); with subsequent authors suggesting that Marx and Lenin's view that this uneven development would wither away was overly optimistic (Giddens, 1970; Mandle, 1980). Scholars from the institutionalist tradition have taken a different view, arguing that economic paths are geographically and historically specific, and the existence of 'iron laws' is not borne out by the facts (Chang & Grabel, 2004; Hodgson, 1999, 2002). In this context, the persistence of long-standing traditional practices can be understood as something driven not by economic forces, but cultural practice (Tamari, 1991).

Neo-liberal approaches, in Williams's view, see participants in the informal economy as individuals exercising free choice and self-determination, against a framework of excessive regulation and state control. This idea, articulated by De Soto and others, and enshrined in much World Bank thinking on the informal economy (De Soto, 1989; Kaufmann & Kaliberda, 1996), strongly resonates with depictions of entrepreneurs as swashbuckling heroes or villains (Armstrong, 2005; Baumol, 2005; Rotefoss & Kolvereid, 2005; Colin C Williams, 2007). The neo-liberal literature on the informal economy is explicit on the need to dismantle regulation, and abandon protectionist policies. Kaufman and Kaliberda, writing in 1996, advocated speedy liberalisation, macro-stability and 'stable and moderate' tax regimes in the post-socialist countries (Kaufmann & Kaliberda, 1996). However, informality persists in spite of neo-liberal shock therapies, and is a major feature of post-socialist economies (Cassidy, 2011; Round & Williams, 2010; Williams & Round, 2008), although it is a much less significant feature in the UK or

elsewhere in North-Western Europe where tax regimes and institutional frameworks and practices restrict the scope for informal practices.

As with the modernisation thesis, **post-structuralist** analyses of the informal economy identify forces of resistance to modernisation, but whilst the modernisation thesis places this in the context of structure - either of uneven development or traditional practice - post-structuralists are more likely to recognise individual and collective agency in the choice to participate in informal work practices (Williams & Windebank, 2005).

Whilst the published scholarship will be considered fully, it is important to recognise that in the context of UK localities, structuralist and post-structuralist interpretations are most important. There has been no research in localities in the UK by scholars adopting a neo-liberal viewpoint, or those advancing the modernisation thesis, which has little to offer in the UK context. This reflects the fundamental premise of the modernisation thesis, that informality is the result of partial and limited capitalist development, primarily in developing countries. To apply this to a country identified as an archetype of capitalist development by Adam Smith, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels is a contradiction in terms.

Structuralist perspectives on the informal economy in the UK have focussed heavily on the question of formalisation, especially the factors forcing individuals to pursue work and business opportunities in the informal sector, and potential mechanisms and processes for formalisation. Much of the research has been carried out under the auspices of East London-based Community Links, which works with entrepreneurs making the transition from informal to formal trading. This constitutes a major resource on the

practice of formalisation (Barbour & Llanes, 2007b, 2013; Copisarow & Barbour, 2004; Katungi et al., 2006; Travers, 2001), but is based on relatively limited numbers of surveys with practitioners and clients of Community Links and other enterprise support organisations. Its relevance is limited by the self-selecting nature of the respondents, and indeed it makes no wider claims to generalisability.

#### **2.4.2 The Informal Economy: Key UK Field Research**

With one important exception, the seminal contribution of Pahl's work in Sheppey in the early 1980's (Pahl, 1984), major studies of the UK informal economy are a post-1990 phenomenon, and the particular emphasis in this section is on research reported since 1997. Given the aims and objectives of this study, the central focus is locality-level research. It is also important to stress that field research in the UK has been relatively limited, with only limited field research since 2010 - that of McElwee and Smith, focussing on different aspects of illegal economic activity in agriculture and fishing (R. Smith, 2015; R. Smith & McElwee, 2011, 2013), and Vershinina and Rodionova with Ukrainian construction workers in London (Vershinina, Rodgers, Ram, Theodorakopoulos, & Rodionova, 2018; Vershinina & Rodionova, 2011).

National policy interest has been limited, unless as a smaller element of tax, welfare or enterprise policy. The Grabiner Report published in 2000 focused on the implications for the taxation system, giving impetus to deterrence focused policies (Lord Grabiner, 2000). Under Labour a major report by the Social Exclusion Unit '*Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas*' was intended to cover the informal economy as part of its remit, but

following ministerial intervention this element was not included (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004).

This was covered by a subsequent piece of work, which drew together the academic and policy literature as well as other survey work in a report for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister discussed in the introduction to this thesis (Evans et al., 2006). The informal economy presents a range of wicked issues for any government, and the very limited range of government research is notable, although a report was commissioned by the Government-sponsored Small Business Council (Williams, 2004b).

The first and most influential field study remains Pahl's Sheppey work in the early 1980's (Pahl, 1984). From the point of view of an examination of the informal economy, he concluded that little work was actually done in what was conventionally understood as the 'black economy'; and what was done on a cash-in-hand basis was not done by the unemployed, but was undertaken by individuals already in work. A great deal of work was done within homes, and in particular better-off households (in Sheppey terms) undertook a large amount of domestic labour - although the Sheppey in which Pahl's research was undertaken was a largely blue-collar community.

After Pahl's work, a number of smaller surveys followed in the 1990's. Leonard undertook work on a nationalist estate in West Belfast (Leonard, 1994, 1998, 2000), and MacDonald carried out work on Teeside (MacDonald, 1994). Taxi-drivers working on a cash-in-hand basis in a seaside town in South West England were the focus of Jordan and Travers's 1998 study (Jordan & Travers, 1998).

Whilst included within the UK literature, Leonard's research was carried out in a part of West Belfast that clearly did not regard itself as British, and where part of the pull of informality was related to strong local feelings about the legitimacy of the British state's role in the community. They were also shaped by conflict-related geographies which restricted access to opportunities in the conventional economy. Leonard highlighted significant levels of very low-paid informal and cash-in-hand working, supplementing income from benefits. MacDonald described mainly male networks centred on pubs and clubs offering temporary, low-paid work in marginal economic sectors; and Jordan and Travers's focus was on taxi-drivers surviving by undercutting each other, and forced to diversify into illegal activities such as drug-dealing.

All three of these studies were conducted on a relatively small-scale in single communities. The major survey of the informal economy in England remains the English Localities Study, led by Williams and Windebank, carried out between 1998 and 2001, and reporting initially in 1999 (Williams, 1999). Funded in part by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) and European sources, this interviewed 861 households in eleven urban and rural localities across England. A number of books have drawn from the survey evidence to discuss cash-in-hand working (Williams, 2004a), the limits of commodification (Williams, 2005), and enterprise culture (Williams, 2006b).

Key conclusions from the research included a recognition that the provision of non-commodified goods and services in local economies persisted, but that where communities were deprived, cash-in-hand work was limited. In contrast, there was much more significant use of cash-in-hand working in affluent communities, often by people already in employment.

In addition to the English Localities Survey, other smaller-scale research was also undertaken in 2001-2002 in Bassetlaw led by Williams (Samers, 2005; Williams & Nadin, 2010a). This highlighted that cash-in-hand transactions were used more widely in better-off areas, where they allowed some respondents to purchase more services, particularly home improvements, than they could otherwise have afforded; and enabled others to avoid tax on part of their income for services such as architectural or design work. In less well-off areas on the other hand, there was much less informal activity, and what was done was more likely to be undertaken on a gift exchange or mutual aid basis.

However, this research has its limits. There is relatively little consideration of the balance between formal and informal working, or market and non-market transactions within household work strategies. This leads Williams and others to attach a weight to informal economic activity as part of local economies which underplays the importance of commoditised economic activity for most households (White, 2006; Williams, 2004; Williams, 2002). Key household needs in the UK - housing, water, power - are met almost entirely within the formal economy. Whilst it is possible to fulfil daily household requirements, such as clothing and food, within the informal economy, this is relatively rare.

Other recent research on the informal economy in the UK is limited. White investigated the processes of mutual aid in two Leicester wards in 2004, utilising a modified version of the Pahl questionnaire (White, 2006), and two further pieces of work focussed on Sheffield. Mollona undertook an anthropological study of a deprived Sheffield locality between 1999 and 2001 (Mollona, 2005); and Fletcher completed 16 semi-structured interviews with unemployed people on Sheffield's Manor Estate in 2007 (Fletcher, 2009).

Finally, Vershinina and Rodionova have researched Ukrainian construction workers in London and published both a reflection on methodology and methods, and a later paper on findings (Vershinina et al., 2018; Vershinina & Rodionova, 2011).

A number of themes emerge from the literature. The first was the broad range of informal economic activity, as well as its persistence and extent, with Williams suggesting that only 50 per cent of work is paid, as well as highlighting the huge extent of self-provisioning (Williams, 2002). Most work is carried out for families and kin, generally for token payments, with other paid informal work largely undertaken by the self-employed and those already in work (Williams, 2006a). Higher income families are the chief beneficiaries of informal work (Williams, 2006b), and most entrepreneurs operating wholly off-the-books have another job, the consequence of what Williams suggests is a large hidden enterprise culture of people who do not always play within the rules (Williams, 2007).

The literature also highlighted the importance of social networks and families in obtaining informal work. Leonard and Fletcher highlight the close-knit families in the estates they study, and Fletcher argues that familial bonding social capital is a key to coping, but also a source of obligations (Fletcher, 2009; Leonard, 1994, 1998, 2000), potentially preventing individuals pursuing economic opportunities elsewhere (Green & White, 2007). In getting work, MacDonald and Mollona showed the importance of male networks centred on pubs (MacDonald, 1994; Mollona, 2005), and White points out the importance of personal recommendations (White, 2006). The role of the informal economy in developing trust and social capital is highlighted by Leonard, Williams and White (Leonard, 1998; White, 2006; Williams, 2001), in particular in affluent areas, and



this highlights the need to place this within the context of wider literature on social capital, discussed at 2.3.4.

Informal and off-the-books activity was a coping strategy to deal with poverty and the perceived inadequacy of state benefits (Jordan & Redley, 1994; Leonard, 1994, 1998, 2000; MacDonald, 1994; Mollona, 2005; White, 2006; Williams, 2001), and individuals see this as vital for providing adequately for their families (Copisarow & Barbour, 2004; Katungi et al., 2006; Travers, 2001). Williams identifies that individuals often offer family members cash-in-hand work as a way of helping them out (Williams & Windebank, 2001; Williams & Windebank, 2000b).

The literature also highlighted the informal economy's role in offering opportunities in areas experiencing industrial restructuring (Fletcher, 2009; Leonard, 1994, 1998, 2000; MacDonald, 1994; Mollona, 2005). The view across these studies was that informal work was seen as a better option than vulnerable employment in the formal economy, with men opting for cash-in-hand manual work in traditional male roles rather than service sector jobs (Fletcher, 2009; MacDonald, 1994; Mollona, 2005), with informal work helping people maintain the dignity of work (Copisarow & Barbour, 2004). However, it needs to be recognised that this work was carried out over a decade ago, and that much has changed in the economy and the labour market since then, developments which will be discussed in Chapter 4. The **potential for the formalisation** of informal activity is also discussed at length by Williams, Copisarow and Barbour, but they recognise that projects supporting formalisation have been limited in size and scope in the UK (Barbour & Llanes, 2007; Copisarow & Barbour, 2004; Williams, 2005).

This research also highlighted the absence of any concentration of informal activity in particular ethnic groups, although the areas surveyed were largely white. Where there were ethnically diverse communities, informal activity meeting their needs develops (Barbour & Llanes, 2007; Copisarow & Barbour, 2004). More recent work has highlighted the importance of informal work for Eastern European migrants in parts of the construction industry in London (Rodgers, Vershinina, Williams, & Theodorakopoulos, 2019; Vershinina et al., 2018; Vershinina & Rodionova, 2011). However, whilst important, this research relates to one place, London; was predominantly focussed on one community, Ukrainian migrants; and although the niche within which these workers were concentrated was not specifically identified, from a reading of the work it could be reasonably inferred that the individuals interviewed were primarily concentrated in smaller-scale construction work and refurbishment, not new-build or civil engineering where employment practices are more regulated.

A limited overlap with criminality was also highlighted, with the exception of the involvement in drug-dealing highlighted by Jordan and Travers; prostitution and handling stolen goods discussed by Mollona; and the illegal activities of Smith and McElwee's respondents. Most of the latter were farmers with legal businesses (Jordan & Travers, 1998; Mollona, 2005; Smith & McElwee, 2013), who engaged in illegal activity such as slaughtering and selling meat outside the established regulatory environment as a sideline. Smith also highlighted illegality in the fishing industry, although the businesses involved were major players in the industry and not small-scale entrepreneurs (BBC News, 2012; R. Smith, 2015).

From this reading of the literature on the informal economy in the UK a number of pointers were drawn for the proposed study. First, it was clear that research on the informal economy in a given location was feasible, and yielded rich data with relevance for policy and scholarship (Williams, 2004a; Williams, 2010; Williams & Ram, 2008). Individuals and households were willing to discuss their experiences, as Williams stated:

*‘...we found that the interviewees had little reticence in talking openly about their paid informal work...’ (Williams & Windebank, 2001, p54)*

Second, it was clear that there had been no substantive field research in England since White’s Leicester fieldwork in 2004 (White, 2006). This period saw significant economic and social change which will be discussed in Chapter 4, including a recession and significant public spending cuts, as well as major welfare and benefits reforms, in particular the continued growth of conditionality. This linked to a third theme, which will also be discussed in Chapter 4, the impact of wider trends in the economy and society, notably the increasing agglomeration in industries such as retail, facilities management, catering and hospitality; with associated centralised human resources and finance functions, which have progressively limited the potential for local discretion in retail and hospitality businesses, and by extension the scope cash-in-hand work.

Finally, the growth of migration from the A8 countries, with highly qualified and motivated migrants competing for jobs with local residents (Campbell, 2013), may have had an impact on the informal sector. Wakefield, where the study area is located had attracted high numbers of new migrants, attracted to agency working in the logistics

sector, with the recruitment of 500 temporary Polish staff by the Next PLC warehouse adjacent to Upton the subject of major press coverage in 2013 (Mason, 2013). An argument can be made that work opportunities which were in the informal sector had moved into the formal sector as a result of the ready supply of agency workers.

### **2.4.3 Household Work Strategies: An Introduction**

This section examines key literature on household work strategies. The different approaches adopted by a range of researchers are discussed, and the historical development of the literature on household work strategies is outlined, in particular the seminal contributions of Oakley and Pahl. Explanations of household strategies are considered, and efforts to resolve the relative importance of structure and agency are outlined. Finally, conclusions are drawn about relating household strategies to a specific context - present-day disadvantaged communities in the United Kingdom.

#### **2.4.3.1 Researching Household Work Strategies: The Contributions of Pahl and Oakley**

The term 'household work strategy' had been used previously in relation to Latin American societies (Wallace, 2002), but in the context of advanced economies, they were introduced in Pahl's Sheppey research. There are a number of problems for researchers investigating household work strategies. The literature is limited, especially in-depth field research, with many authors relying on data from wider household surveys, and drawing inferences from statistical analysis. Second, published work has

tended to take either quantitative or qualitative approaches, as highlighted by Pilcher (Pilcher, 2000). Quantitative studies have the potential to display trends over time, but in terms of explaining why households adopt certain strategies, and the processes (deliberative, coercive, habitual) that determine these, they have less strength.

In turn, qualitative research in the field is limited, with the key resources being wider studies of the informal economy, notably the work of Pahl which shaped subsequent thinking considerably, as well as the contributions of Williams, Windebank, White and others (Leonard, 1994, 1998; MacDonald, 1994; White, 2006; Williams, 2006a; Williams & Windebank, 2005; Williams, 2004; Williams & Windebank, 2003). Beyond these studies, there is a lack of robust qualitative research. Much of what can be gleaned and inferred in the wider published literature focuses on gender divisions and housework, and fails to consider culture, choice and internal dynamics within households.

Some studies, notably Oakley's work, made a major contribution to the discussion of household work strategies, and how to research them (Oakley, 1985); but Oakley's field research took place in 1970, was published in book form in 1974, and went to a further edition early in the following decade. Since then, no author has looked in this kind of depth at housework in the UK. Whilst there has been work on gendered roles in specific areas such as housework and household budgeting, much of this has been quantitative, and has not explained why choices are made; and none of it has examined the lives of individuals in the same kind of depth as Oakley. Oakley addressed a fundamentally different world, with no single parents in her sample of 40, and only six women with jobs outside the family home.

Nevertheless, her key conclusions are still important. First, she identified the importance of gendered perspectives in any discussion of how households function; and the very significant disparity between men's and women's contribution in the home. Second, she identified the importance of understanding work beyond waged employment, which Wallace argues had an impact on subsequent work by Pahl and others (Wallace, 2002). This linked to an understanding of the importance of the domestic sphere in women's lives, and its contribution to their feelings of self-worth and fulfilment. The links between performance in the domestic sphere, self-worth and fulfilment also link to discussions of respectability developed in the work of Skeggs (Skeggs, 1997, 2004). Whilst Skeggs's focus in these and other works was on the aesthetics of clothing and appearance, how the domestic sphere was maintained through housework was also a focus, and an important element of femininity.

*'femininity is used by working-class women as a means of deflecting associations of pathology, poverty, and pollution' (Skeggs, 2001: 298)*

These internalised, learnt behaviours of 'respectable' domestic performance are also discussed in relation to mining communities by Slaughter et al. (Dennis, Henriques, & Slaughter, 1969). Oakley focusses on the significant effort involved in the planning and organisation of housework and childcare, and the fact that this burden falls disproportionately on women.

In turn, Pahl's work on household strategies needs to be seen in the context of his long-term interest in the sociology of work. In particular, he attempted to make sense of what can now be seen as the end of the post-war full-employment consensus, and the

triumph of neo-liberalism, particularly in his work with Jonathan Gershuny (Gershuny & Pahl, 1979). They argued that technology could potentially reduce work opportunities in the conventional economy, but with wider social implications.

It was also in this context that Pahl initiated the detailed research programme on the Isle of Sheppey in 1981. The study recognised the particular circumstances of Sheppey, contradicting to a degree the arguments of subsequent critics that the emphasis on household work strategies ignored the role of external structure and agency (G. Crow, 1989; Morgan, 1989) as discussed in a previous section.

Pahl concluded:

- Little work was actually done in what was conventionally understood as the 'black economy'.
- What was done on a cash-in-hand basis was not done by the unemployed, but was undertaken by individuals already in work.
- A vast amount of work was done in the domestic sphere, with better-off households undertaking a large amount of domestic labour.

This final conclusion reflected considerable polarisation between households, with high levels of involvement in a much wider range of household work, and higher overall levels of domestic activity in wealthier households. Thirty years on, Pahl's work remains a key text in the study of household work strategies, and has informed much subsequent work notably that of Leonard and Williams.

More recently some research has revisited Pahl's Sheppey data, in particular a large collection of essays by young people about how they saw their future, which do not feature in 'Divisions of Labour' but which were also part of what was a wider interdisciplinary social research project led by Pahl on Sheppey. This was part of further work which revisited Sheppey, funded by HEFCE (The Higher Education Funding Council for England) (Living and Working on Sheppey, 2020), combining arts-based projects and oral history work focussing on the former Royal Navy dockyard and those who worked there. A number of articles were stimulated by this research. Lyon et. al. re-examined the essays, but were hindered in their work by being unable to track any of the writers, and even though the original Sheppey work was well-documented, there was a lack of relevant contextual information which could have illuminated either issues at the time, or subsequent change (Lyon & Crow, 2012; Lyon, Morgan Brett, & Crow, 2012).

Whilst highlighting the difficulties involved in revisiting research in this way - especially when the original research was so comprehensive, a reflection of the resources available from the pre-Sir Keith Joseph Social Science Research Council (SSRC) - Lyon and Crow make important points regarding the continuing usefulness of Pahl's work.

*'We might nevertheless read his focus on work and households as a way into exploring community that pays particular dividends because these aspects of social life are always contextualized in relation to others, such as schooling, housing, consumption and local politics.'* (Lyon & Crow, 2012: p500)

Crow and others also strongly allude to the Sheppey research in a 2009 discussion of lessons from previous recessions, and how those lessons could be informed by revisiting



previous sociological research in areas experiencing economic change (Crow, Hatton, Lyon, & Strangleman, 2009). They suggest four critical questions for researchers in these situations, which are potentially relevant to this study, and which will be returned to both implicitly and explicitly later in the study:

*'How have we come to be where we are currently?', 'Who gets what?', 'How do we know what we claim to know?', and 'What sorts of lessons can be drawn to inform thinking about the future?'* (Crow, Hatton, Lyon, & Strangleman, 2009: 1)

The contributions of two of Pahl's co-researchers in the Sheppey study are also important, Claire Wallace and Alan Warde; in part because they extend Pahl's work. Wallace in particular has continued to make the case for household work strategies as a useful framework of analysis over two decades.

Her reflection on theoretical and analytical questions relating to household strategies is also significant (Wallace, 2002). She addresses questions of agency and structure, and the challenge posed by Pahl's view of households, rather than individuals, as the key unit of analysis; and of work as encompassing informal and domestic work as well as waged employment. She is careful to make clear that she does not see households as purely rational economic actors, suggesting they have a range of economic and non-economic goals. She is also clear that the very term 'household' needs careful definition, and should be:

*'flexible enough to include a variety of different family forms and differently related, as well as non-related, members.'* (Wallace, 2002: 281)

## **2.4.4 Housework and Consumption**

A number of key themes emerge from the literature on housework and consumption of direct relevance to the proposed study - housework, the gender division of labour in housework, and its relation to the concept of home; domestic outsourcing; and consumption.

### **2.4.4.1 Homes and Housework**

The first is the question of the gender balance of household tasks, with a large proportion of studies highlighting profound imbalances in domestic responsibilities between women and men, borne out in subsequent research from the UK (J. Armstrong, 2006; Cousins & Tang, 2002; Gray, 2006; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Kan, 2008; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Pilcher, 2000), and the United States (Hersch & Stratton, 2002; Waite & Lee, 2013). Even where states take measures to reduce men's working hours, as in France (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010), the Netherlands (Wotschack & Wittek, 2006), and Sweden (Evertsson & Neramo, 2007), there is only limited evidence of men doing more at home.

This is linked to further research which highlights that the overwhelming burden of family scheduling and household management devolves to women, and women feel that the complexities, difficulties and demands this presents are completely underestimated by male partners and the wider community (Frisco & Williams, 2003; Speakman & Marchington, 1999). Speakman and Marchington highlight the phenomenon of male

partners avoiding certain tasks, such as washing and laundry, by repeatedly operating washing-machines incorrectly and making mistakes with laundry. In the circumstances, women opted to undertake the tasks themselves. This can be compounded by cultural expectations. In their discussion of working-class women's lives in Wythenshawe, Ward et al. highlight the very different expectations of women and their partners about how they would spend time when they were not engaged in paid employment. They describe the life of one of their woman respondents:

*'She has five children, all aged under 15. She does the bulk of the caring, getting the kids up and ready for school and ensuring that each child arrives when and where they should be. She also does the bulk of the shopping and the cooking. Her husband plays only a minor role in the social reproduction of the household. This gender division of labour manifests, for example, when they both go to the supermarket, for, as she describes it, 'when we go together he sits in the car and I go round the shop.'* (Ward, Fagan, McDowell, Perrons, & Ray, 2007: 312)

The almost universal expectation amongst the women they interviewed was that a male partner's contribution to household tasks (if they had a male partner or husband) in the household would be minimal. Instead, they often managed a complex web of relationships with mothers, sisters and other female relatives to arrange childcare; and did most of the housework themselves. Authors, from Oakley onwards, have ascribed this to patriarchal power relations, and others have highlighted the extra pressures on women as a result of the effective expectation that households need at least one-and-a-half incomes to live comfortably (McDowell, 2004, 2005; Ward et al., 2007).

Nevertheless some researchers have identified a gradual shift, with Bianchi et. al. noting that the time which US men are committing to domestic tasks has increased (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012); and other authors in the Netherlands and the UK reporting similar developments (de Meester, Zorlu, & Mulder, 2011; Oakley, 1985; Speakman & Marchington, 1999; Treas, 2008; van der Lippe, de Ruijter, de Ruijter, & Raub, 2010; Wallace, 2002). Nevertheless, it has to be recognised that bias can creep into research of this nature because of self-reporting by men that they were taking on more at home.

However, there are additional explanations for the gender imbalance in the performance of these tasks. Skeggs's focus on the pressure that women feel on themselves to perform particular roles, and to internalise patterns of behaviour and activity as part of what they have been conditioned to regard as respectable and moral is also useful in this context (Skeggs, 1988, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2011). Women's socialisation with their mothers, grandmothers and other female relatives also shape their values and practices. Further insights come from the literature of consumption and branding, and a series of pieces of research from both Britain and the US offer insights on how this happens through looking at how women's shopping habits and preferences are formed (Davies & Fitchett, 2015; Minahan & Huddleston, 2010; Moore, Wilkie, & Lutz, 2002). Fitchett and Davies's research took a critical oral history approach and involved work with a number of family groups over a sustained period . They suggest:

*'...that women, as mothers, transfer norms and values to other women, as daughters, who in turn inherit and internalise these organising norms as their own.'*  
(Davies & Fitchett, 2015: 729)

They argue for the existence of family signatures, which are enduring myths and stories that help in the process of organising and sense-making. These signatures are:

*'...the mark of a person (as a written form) and reflect(s) the structuring core from which the multifaceted aspects of individual and family identity become manifest in practices, expressions, and memory...family signatures can be seen to operate and proliferate...[and] become structured into a range of everyday practices, attitudes, and norms.'* (Davies & Fitchett, 2015: 739)

A range of factors in the history of any family shape the way that individuals and households approach housework, the relative importance that they ascribe to domestic and external spheres, the different standards and values they have internalised, and how these manifest themselves in their housework practices. Much of this is linked to how individuals, families and households feel about their homes, and in turn to what their idea of home is. Some individuals have an instrumental and utilitarian attitude to home - in Le Corbusier's words, it is 'a machine for living in' (Le Corbusier, 1931), and a home's value is what it enables them to do within and beyond it; for others, it is a central and defining part of their lives. There is a significant literature on meanings of home (Blunt & Dowling, 2006; Leith, 2006; Marrone, 2016), all of it highlighting its link with self-image and well-being. Coward highlights the impact of the absence of 'home' for homeless people and those living in temporary settings (Coward, 2018), and Brickell showing its contested nature (Brickell, 2012). As a concept, 'home' is not simply a material thing, but is socially constructed, as argued by Gurney (Gurney, 1997, 1999).

This in turn can affect how different people within a household can view what is ‘doing housework’ properly, as discussions between the researcher and his partner testify <sup>8</sup>.

#### 2.4.4.2 Domestic Outsourcing

Domestic outsourcing is also identified as an issue in the literature, with an initial assumption that as incomes grew and, with it, the need to either spend more time at work, or pursue more leisure interests beyond the home, households would opt to outsource domestic tasks such as cleaning, gardening or childcare to other providers, on either a formal or informal basis. In the literature it is recognised that outsourcing is an element of some household strategies (Bargeman & Knulst, 2003; Williams & Nadin, 2012).

In both quantitative research, as well as in the relatively limited amount of qualitative research which has examined the issue, trust and quality standards have been identified as critical issues. Aspects of the question of trust and domestic outsourcing have been extensively examined in the Dutch context by both Bargeman and Knulst, and De Ruijter et al. (Bargeman & Knulst, 2003; De Ruijter, Van Der Lippe, & Raub, 2003; De Ruijter & Weesie, 2007), in France by Windebank (Windebank, 2007), across Europe by Kvist and Assve et. al. (Assve, Fuochi, & Mencarini, 2014; Kvist, 2012), and Australia by Baxter et

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<sup>8</sup> The researcher grew up in a middle-class home which was also the location of his father’s dental practice. His mother managed the dental practice and helped chairside, and at various stages cleaners were employed to keep the house and surgery clean. Cleaning as a task did not fascinate the researcher’s mother, and whilst she did it, she did not accord it a high priority. The researcher’s partner grew up in a skilled working-class home, where her mother (a cutlery grinder) and father (a cutler) placed considerable emphasis on tidiness and cleanliness. The researcher’s partner and her mother both also worked cleaning other people’s houses at various stages, and have clear expectations of what a ‘proper job’ is, resulting in the researcher’s partner suggesting that: “John, you’re middle-class, you can’t see dirt”.

al. and Bittman et. al. (Baxter, Hewitt, & Western, 2009; Bittman, Matheson, & Meagher, 1999; Craig & Baxter, 2016; Craig, Perales, Vidal, & Baxter, 2016). In the UK similar research was carried out in Sheffield by Williams et. al. (Williams, Windebank, & Nadin, 2012; Windebank, 2010).

This largely quantitative research was not able to undertake a granular analysis of the reasons individuals made choices, but did confirm the importance of trust as an issue as well as highlighting the importance of network embeddedness. Research by De Ruijter and Weesie in the Netherlands showed that builders who knew those for whom they were working were more likely to quote a lower price and avoid cost-cutting approaches (De Ruijter & Weesie, 2007). However, the builders with whom research was undertaken were specialists undertaking larger jobs, rather than small traders in the 'handyman' sector, whom the researchers were unable to recruit. Similar conclusions have also been drawn in the UK context (Williams, Adom, Baric, & Ladan, 2011; Williams et al., 2012; Windebank, 2010). Like the Dutch authors, they also highlighted trust and quality issues related to having others working in the home, and recognised that opting for self-provisioning and DIY was not always a willing choice but was often forced on households because of market failure (Williams & Windebank, 2005; Williams & Windebank, 2003; Jan Windebank, 2010).

In this connection single person households can face additional costs and complications compared to those living in couples, and the additional costs experienced by single women living on their own have been highlighted by Treas and De Ruijter. (Treas & De Ruijter, 2008). Trust is a particularly important issue for vulnerable households, which

has driven a trend for commercial solutions which may cost more, such as service contracts and extended warranties.

#### **2.4.4.3 Consumption**

What is described as **consumption work** is increasingly important (De Ruijter, Treas, & Cohen, 2005). As labour-saving devices have been introduced to reduce the burden of some household tasks, other tasks have effectively been reimposed - assembling flat-pack furniture, or domestic recycling (Glucksmann, 2013; Glucksmann & Wheeler, 2013). New patterns of provision effectively oblige consumers to research and negotiate for goods and services. Glucksmann describes a developing situation in which 'consumption work' is a significant part of household strategies. The wider historical background - the gradual disappearance of vertical integration in the financial services industry, changing retail patterns, the growth of the internet to this, and the growth of recycling - will be discussed in the next chapter. Harvey and others (Harvey et al., 2001) undertook an early analysis of the trends which have changed the nature of consumption, looking at the changing nature of product development and production by post-Fordist firms, as well as greater degrees of market segmentation, and the emerging role of internet shopping. They concluded that:

*'Innovation in production, particularly shifts in forms of mass manufacturing, has increased varieties and range of product. This is often conceived by producers as providing greater choice for a sovereign consumer, one who consumes according*



*to principles of utility in relation to price and, for some products, in terms of status distinctions.’ (Harvey et al., 2001: 39)*

At the same time, the process of exercising that choice has imposed new burdens on consumers, especially the growth of internet-based shopping for products and services as diverse as holidays, home insurance, clothing or groceries. This raises practical issues, most obviously in relation to the delivery of internet shopping, where parcel collection for those who work away from home during the day is an issue. Supermarket shopping is also an additional task for most respondents, which necessitates access to a vehicle or good public transport networks, as is budgeting and financial management in an era of internet banking, and greater choice and complexity in savings and insurance products.

As Glucksmann states

*‘New modes of shopping, often arising from technological innovation, presume new skills and work on the part of the consumer, if they are to be enjoyed as objects of consumption.’ (Glucksmann, 2013: 10)*

So, whilst some of the tasks identified by Pahl in his research such as allotment-gardening, jam-making, making clothes or making curtains may be less important than in the late 1970’s, other activities have taken their place, notably the growth of shopping as a leisure activity. Self-provisioning of various kinds remains important to many people, and can include undertaking DIY rather than engaging builders, or growing fruit and vegetables on an allotment. It needs to be seen as an important secondary element of work strategies, often undertaken for non-economic reasons such as self-fulfilment

and personal interest, thus reinforcing the non-utility maximising motivations identified by White and Williams (White, 2006; Williams, 2003; Williams, Nadin, & Windebank, 2012).

#### **2.4.5 Care: Introduction**

Care and care-related issues are recognised as an important component of household work strategies in the literature from Pahl onwards. Pahl, for example (working with Claire Wallace) identified forty-one tasks as the basis of his surveys with Sheppey residents (Pahl, 1984: 214-215), and of these seven related to childcare. He also discussed help for elderly relatives and household members, although these were not identified as tasks within the questionnaire template.

From the researcher's experience of working in the case study locality and other mining communities, it was anticipated that care would be an important dimension of household strategies. Therefore, the literature on care was identified as being very important to the study. What was not anticipated was that the process of research would present continuing challenges in terms of understanding, which required wider and wider research into the care literature as the process of research, analysis and writing continued.

This section reviews the literature, starting with a definition of care, before moving to considering how a discussion of the ethics of care illuminates questions of motivation for carers. There is then an examination of the specific UK policy context, and what this

means for carers. Specific types of care - for children and for the elderly - are the next focus, followed by a discussion of the literature relating to care for animals. Finally, there is an examination of the interaction between care, space and work.

#### **2.4.5.1 Defining Care**

Tronto provides a useful definition of care, developed initially in collaboration with Berenice Fisher.

*'On the most general level, we suggest that caring be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, our selves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web' (Tronto, 1993: 103)*

Tronto's definition of care is a broad one. She suggests a number of caveats to more traditional definitions of care which limit its scope and deny aspects of its nature. First, care is not limited to human interaction with others, but also includes care for objects (for example a historical building or artefact), animals and the environment. Second, it is not dyadic or individualistic, but can be undertaken within or amongst groups. Third, it is defined culturally, its nature varying in time and place. Finally, it is a continuing process.

Tronto also identified that care occurs at four staged levels. At the first is caring about, a recognition that care is necessary - whether it is about an issue, a situation or a person. From this care evolves to 'taking care of' assuming some responsibility for the

issue, situation or thing, identifying need and determining how to respond to it. The next stage is care-giving, directly meeting needs for care. The final stage is care-receiving, which involves responding to care; and possibly addressing its appropriacy, and whether needs are understood and the priorities adopted by others are the right ones.

#### **2.4.5.2 Care: Ethics, Morals and Impact**

In the context of household work strategies the question of care raises moral issues as well as issues of impact. Many carers describe their caring as something that must be done, because of a sense of duty or personal responsibility and duty. Scholars from a range of traditions identify altruism as an important human trait, for example Hodgson's identification of altruism as an aspect of the institutionalism of Clarence Ayres and Thorstein Veblen (Geoffrey Hodgson, 2004). Counterposed to this is the effective denial of unselfish motives for altruism as a factor by economists committed to utility-maximising rational-actor models, notably Gary Becker (Becker, 1981). In the UK context the work of scholars such as Linda McDowell offers a useful corrective, and more importantly one which, unlike that of Becker and the public choice theorists who followed him, is actually related to fieldwork with carers. McDowell invokes the loosely-defined bogey known as neo-liberalism, but more concretely identifies what the policy strands grouped within the so-called neo-liberal project cannot do:

*'What it cannot do, of course, is allocate those resources that are outside the market - goods and services exchanged voluntarily and for love, in the household and the locality.'* (McDowell, 2004: 146)

In turn, this reduces the space available for voluntary or collective actions, spaces often occupied by women. Economic changes, particularly in terms of women's working lives are having an impact on what is possible. As McDowell, writing in 2004 suggested

*'The current period, I suggest is one of crisis and change in which gendered social relations are being recast into forms that are not yet clear.'* (McDowell, 2004: p148)

Considered a decade and a half later, those forms are still unclear. Care for children, or elderly or disabled relatives, is felt to be an over-riding responsibility by many low-income women, determining every other aspect of their lives (Innes & Scott, 2003; McDowell, Ray, Perrons, Fagan, & Ward, 2005; Raw & McKie, 2020; Ward et al., 2007). Caring is not just the practical *caring for* but is also the emotional *caring about*, reflected in widespread reluctance in working-class communities to utilise paid-for childcare or other paid-for services (Bradley, Hakim, Price, & Mitchell, 2008; Dex, 2003; Scott, Campbell, & Brown, 2001; Skinner, 2003; Wheelock & Jones, 2002).

This moral and ethical commitment to care as a central aspect of household life recurs across the literature, and is confirmed in research beyond the UK context. Writing from a Canadian viewpoint, England suggests that

*'...the home is also becoming a key site where functions previously undertaken by the state (like health care and child care) increasingly have to occur...'* (England, 2010: 135).

and that whilst the role of individuals (especially women) as wage-earners is exalted in political and policy discourse, their caregiving roles and responsibilities are neglected.

In this context it is also important to note the contribution of a number of authors, in particular Arlie Hochschild, on the emotional impact of caring. The literature on emotional labour (the emotional effort involved in paid employment working with people, as a care assistant, for example) identified initially by Hochschild is important, insofar as it identifies the magnitude of this effort (Bolton & Boyd, 2003; Hochschild, 2012; Toerien & Kitzinger, 2017). However, it is the literature on emotion work (the emotional effort involved in unpaid work, notably within families) which is most important. Wharton and Erickson identify the negative impact of emotion work on women's careers and employment (Wharton & Erickson, 1995), and De Vault identified a wide range of emotion work strategies which her women respondents used to manage the emotions of other family members (DeVault, 1999). Minnotte et. al. suggest that men's working hours have a negative impact on their performance of emotion work (Minnotte, Pedersen, Mannon, & Kiger, 2010), whilst Erickson suggests that differences in the performance of emotion work derive from gender construction, and not specifically from sex (Erickson, 2005).

It has to be recognised that carers experience mixed feelings; with individuals recognising that they need to suppress negative feelings towards and about those for whom they were caring. These phenomena are recognised by Simpson & Acton (2013) who identify the dissonance between true and expressed feelings in relation to dementia care, and Von Scheve who describes close and adaptive links between emotion and its regulation (von Scheve, 2012).

### **2.4.5.3 Care: The Policy and Institutional Context**

The discussion of care also needs to take note of its wider political context. Specifically, it needs to relate to the impact of the shift away from institutional care towards care in the community after the Griffiths Report of 1988, as described by Langan and Thane (Langan, 1990; Thane, 2009), which significantly accelerated an existing trend towards de-institutionalisation of care for older people, people with learning disabilities and people with mental health problems. This paralleled developments which had already integrated pupils with special needs in mainstream education after the 1978 Warnock Report and the 1981 Education Act. The long-term consequences of these policy changes had significant impacts which continue, and contested questions of rights and resources remain unresolved more than thirty years later (Wanless, 2006).

What was clear from this research, as stated previously, was that whilst the post-Griffiths developments were described as care in the community, they were effectively care in the family for many. This reflected the continuing weakness of community and voluntary sector infrastructure in this field (Buckingham, Pinch, & Sunley, 2012), the

disappearance of initiatives developed under New Labour, described by Bauld et. al. (Bauld, Mackinnon, & Judge, 2002), and their patchy incorporation into mainstream programmes and activity in the UK, similarly to what England described in the Canadian context as:

*‘a strong normative expectation that families will step in and provide care at home in instances where in the past the care recipient would likely have remained in hospital’ (England, 2010: 141)*

Advances in medicine and changes in approaches to the treatment and management of long-term and limiting conditions, as well as changing expectations on the part of people with disabilities and their families have also had impacts. Treatments which in previous decades required lengthy and complex in-patient treatment are now dealt with in community settings.

The real advance represented by the end of long-term institutional care for people with disabilities or severe and enduring long-term mental health problems has an impact on families and households. Until the 1970’s and 1980’s many of these individuals would have been moved into institutional settings as quite young children, living out shorter, less-rewarding, less autonomous and frequently more brutalised lives in Victorian institutions. In most cases, people with these conditions now remain with their families.



This can present serious challenges. Care for children on the autism spectrum, for example, can be complex, demanding and unremitting, and has huge physical, social and economic impacts on the families involved. Whilst the literature on young people with autism is extensive, the literature on the impact on parents and households is limited. American research focussed on parental stress (Valicenti-McDermott et al., 2015), the developmental impact on siblings (Orsmond & Seltzer, 2007), and community interaction (P. S. Samuel, Hobden, & LeRoy, 2011). Research in the UK has been more limited, with Willis focussing on potential learning for professionals from the experience of parents with autistic children (Willis, 2007). What this highlights is a lack of research on the social and economic contexts of families with autistic children; as well as the nature of their lived experience.

Finally, literature on life courses and ageing illuminates changes in the nature of the ageing process in recent decades (Gilleard & Higgs, 2016; Humphrey, 1993; Tarrant, 2010), and specifically the importance of social context in this. This is linked to the question of care, and the employment issues related to it (Age UK, 2014; Armstrong & Armstrong, 2005; Dujardin et al., 2011; Graham, 1991; León et al., 2005; D. Lyon & Glucksmann, 2008). The demands on care workers have increased, their terms and conditions of care workers have worsened as a result of real-terms budget reductions, and the economy now offers other opportunities for potential care-workers<sup>9</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> The researcher works part-time in a supermarket with a number of people who previously worked in care settings, but have left for better terms and conditions working on supermarket checkouts.

#### 2.4.5.4: Processes and Context

The focus of the proposed research was on all forms of care, care for children, older people, people with disabilities and care for animals. However, it needs to be recognised that most of the scholarship on care in household strategies focusses on childcare. This focus is legitimate, as childcare is a significant activity for most families, and patterns of childcare have a regularity and consistency across cases which other areas of care do not. For example, the onset of dependence varies hugely between elderly people, with many individuals in their seventies and eighties needing minimal external assistance with daily tasks or independent living. Likewise, the needs and circumstances of people with disabilities vary hugely.

The question of childcare is a deeply contested one, and both reflects different understandings of women's orientation towards work and the labour market, as well as highlighting questions of structure and agency. Is the primary role which women take in childcare in most households a response to still-pervasive patriarchal structures in society (McDowell, 2004; McKie, Gregory, & Bowlby, 2002)? Or does it reflect embedded cultural preferences, as suggested by authors such as Hakim (Bradley et al., 2008; Hakim, 1995, 2000, 2002, 2003a); where women consciously choose what authors such as Becker would see as sub-optimal outcomes in a labour market offering more lucrative economic opportunities in the labour market (Becker, 1981)?

McKie et al. argued in 2002 that the choice to give up work or work part-time often reflected the enduring pull of traditional family and domestic roles, although this was balanced by newly opening roles and changing identities for women, in part facilitated by successive Government policies (McKie et al., 2002). What this Government policy had not effected was a significant increase in childcare provision, given the commitment of successive governments to the market as the enabler of new childcare provision (Ward et al., 2007). This shortage of affordable childcare in the UK, as well as the cultural reluctance to countenance childcare outside the family in working-class communities, has been highlighted by a number of researchers (Gray, 2005; Hank & Buber, 2009; Innes & Scott, 2003; McDowell, 2005; Skinner, 2003; Wheelock & Jones, 2002).

This reluctance is, in part, practical as well as cultural. Grandparents and other family members offer more flexibility, and are able to deal with emergencies or extra demands such as school training days. They also generally do not represent an additional cost on constrained household budgets. The cultural factors are important however. As Ward et al. point out:

*‘What caring by another member of the family allowed, in the minds of the mothers with whom we spoke at least, was the re-creation of the home, both physically - in terms of toys and other objects - and in terms of a space in which a particular type of caring can be performed.’ (Ward et al., 2007: 321)*

This also extends to grandparents assuming other roles, such as attending parent’s evenings at school, taking children for medical treatment or dealing with other issues

where a family member needs to act *in loco parentis*. Policies which aim to enable access to work through encouraging public and private provision of childcare rarely tackle crises such as illness, temporary or permanent restrictions on access to transport. All these generate difficulties for combining caring and working, as do changes over time as children grow and parents move in and out of the labour market.

At the same time, there is a crucial role in terms of co-ordination, and much of the research highlights that this remains a primary responsibility for mothers in the UK and elsewhere (Duncan, Edwards, Reynolds, & Alldred, 2003; Duncan & Smith, 2006; Fuller & Unwin, 2007; McDowell et al., 2005; Thebaud, 2010; Ward et al., 2007; Wheelock & Jones, 2002). This needs to be seen in the context of the continuing gender inequality which is reinforced by the interconnections between gendered divisions of labour in both the labour market and in domestic work. As McDowell et al. pointed out:

*‘Despite temporal and geographical variations, a gendered division of labour based upon a dominant ideology of separate spheres for men and women has until recently been part of the prevailing ideology and state policy in many western societies.’ (McDowell, Ray, Perrons, Fagan, & Ward, 2005: 220)*

This division has been continually challenged over some decades by women’s rising participation in waged employment, which has started to undermine prevailing assumptions about what is appropriate to the realms of ‘workplace’ and ‘household’ respectively. Family and household patterns have also continued to become more diverse, with a growth in lone-parent households. Marriage rates have declined, and

along with increasing divorce rates, have resulted in a growth in the number of individuals living alone, as well as the proportion of second and subsequent marriages.

All these result in a pattern of childcare which can be ever more complex, with parents living longer distances from each other, as well as employment patterns which make it more rather than less difficult for working parents living apart to share childcare. Nevertheless, responsibility for this predominantly devolves to women, given that men's contributions to household work are only increasing to a marginal extent even in countries such as Sweden (Evertsson & Neramo, 2007; Forsberg, 2009; Treas & Tai, 2016), and traditional patterns are more firmly embedded in the UK and USA (Bryson, 2003; Kan, 2008; Lyonette & Crompton, 2015; Philp & Wheatley, 2011).

*'Women's increased labour market participation has thus far been at the cost of increasing the total work burden on women, given men's apparent reluctance to expand the time that they devote to care or domestic work...'* (McDowell et al., 2005: 223)

Here some thought is needed on what other factors this gender imbalance might reflect. The preference theory approach offered by Hakim and others might offer one explanation (Bradley et al., 2008; Hakim, 2000, 2002, 2003b), but McDowell et. al. argue for a more nuanced approach which recognises primarily structural factors.

*'One of the major debates is about the extent to which decisions are the outcome of a distinct set of preferences and choices...or rather negotiated responses to the*

*constraints of, inter alia, income, support networks, local services and facilities, national policy frameworks, and national and local ideologies of femininity and mothering. Here we locate our work within the second approach that insists that women's decisions about their multiple responsibilities are taken within a nexus of relational ties that both differentiate and bind social groups, whether based on class, gender, ethnicity or co-location, and within a set of social assumptions and values about femininity, motherhood and child rearing.'* (McDowell et al., 2005: 223)

Rosalind Edwards reinforces this view:

*'In understanding family relationships, and particularly mothers' practices in relation to their children, prioritising a decontextualized economic rationality misattributes both form of reasoning and values. Again and again, careful research in the UK reveals the landscape of family life to be deeply moral and social...Social ties and moral responsibilities are placed centre stage with people building identities and reputations as a certain sort of member of their family.'* (Edwards, 2019: 5)

Other authors also argue for a recognition that attitudes to care vary within the UK. It has also been pointed out that cultures and attitudes vary spatially and that basing national-level policy changes on spatially blind assumptions is problematic. Duncan and colleagues (Duncan et al., 2003; Duncan & Smith, 2006), for example, have identified regional variations in gender cultures in the UK, which relate to the history of gendered

divisions of labour in both homes and workplaces in these regions, as well as to class, cultural and ethnic variations. Other scholars have followed Tronto and argued that care is a matter of moralities and rationalities (Hall, 2016; McDowell, 2004).

This question of moralities is a feature of much of the scholarship around care for older people, both within and beyond the household. Some UK literature considers the ethics of care for older people within the context of wider care issues (Edwards, 2019; Hall, 2016; Raw & McKie, 2020), including scholarship from Finland (Sihto, 2018, 2019), and Norway (Pettersen, 2012).

Through focus-group research, Sihto examined the emotional impact of care for older parents on (mostly) middle-aged women, highlighting that even in a Nordic country, care responsibilities devolved to women. In addition, again despite being a Nordic country with a commitment to policies of 'ageing in place' for older people and substantial state resources to support this, women also felt it incumbent on themselves to commit significant time to care and practical support for ageing parents, even over significant distances. Sihto also usefully highlighted the conflicted feelings experienced by some women where their previous relationships with parents, in particular their fathers, were not good. Pettersen places ethical questions in a wider context, in particular highlighting the limits of a selfless altruism where the needs of others are always placed above those of the carer. Instead, she argues for what she describes as mature care, a set of relationships based on respect and limits. She posits a model in which:

*‘Care work is a shared responsibility, not only by those who ethically commit to the normative value of care, it also a matter of justice and a political responsibility.’  
(Pettersen, 2012: 382)*

This is closer to the networks of friendship, family and care that Bowlby identifies (Bowlby, 2011), or the networks of reciprocity identified within working-class communities by Raw and McKie (Raw & McKie, 2020).

A final topic that any discussion of process and context in care needs to address is one which is not generally considered within research, but which has importance to many individuals and household is the question of care for animals. As the research was planned, this issue was not identified as a theme, but arose during fieldwork on a number of occasions. Pets are an important part of the emotional landscape and identity of many households and individuals, but the scholarship in the area is relatively limited. The spatial imperatives and other requirements of pet ownership are definitely not discussed to any degree in either the housing or planning literature, although they have been highlighted by Rowan in a doctoral thesis considering the impacts of a Scottish housing-based regeneration scheme (Rowan, 2015). For those who own pets a suitable location is a critical factor in where they choose to live.

The literature also suggests pet-ownership has positive benefits for mental health. This reinforces the conclusions of what is a substantial body of literature from across the health field. Utz and Stanley et. al. both report better overall health outcomes for pet owners (Stanley, Conwell, Bowen, & Van Orden, 2014; Utz, 2014), Rijken reported



higher activity levels for dog-owners (Rijken & Van Beek, 2016), Black reported lower loneliness scores for pet owners (Black, 2012), and Wisdom highlights the link between pet-ownership and improved chances of recovery from severe mental illness (Wisdom, Saedi, & Green, 2009). McNicholas has also highlighted the positive links between pet-ownership and health outcomes (McNicholas, 2014; McNicholas et al., 2005), and in a study of four cities in the US and Australia, Wood et al. describe a positive relationship between pet-ownership and improved levels of social capital (Wood et al., 2017). In addition, Cloutier and Peetz report better outcomes for pet owners in romantic relationships (Cloutier & Peetz, 2016).

#### **2.4.5.5 Care, Time and Space**

Space and time are also critical dimensions of the question of care. Sihto's research which has already been highlighted, identifies space as an issue:

*'In Finland, the culture of full-time work continues to be strong. Consequently, working women with caring responsibilities often combine care with full-time work. The everyday lives of these women are further complicated by the fact that Finland is sparsely populated and geographically large.'* (Sihto, 2018: 62)

Space raises the question for geographically dispersed families of who takes responsibility for an elderly relative, or other family member in need of care, with this generally but not always devolving to the closest family member(s). In some cases, small

families and the demands of particular jobs impose more complex and onerous arrangements. For the researcher, care for an elderly mother involved frequent flights from Leeds to Belfast, and more recently for the researcher and his partner, babysitting and looking after grandchildren has required a round trip to Cyprus. McKie et al. identify two aspects of the problem:

*'We draw attention to the inadequacy of public policy that does not incorporate an awareness of the demands of the everyday across the lifecourse, of which a spatial-temporal component should be fundamental...Time-space frameworks of analysis are rarely considered in relation to the realities of the interface between home and work, especially as these impact upon women and children.'* (McKie et al., 2002: 897-898)

They argue for an appreciation of the multi-dimensional nature of the spatial and temporal frameworks within which caring, working and other tasks are combined. Repeatedly in the literature the finely balanced nature of most care frameworks is highlighted (McDowell, 2004, 2005; McDowell et al., 2005; Ward et al., 2007), but a recognition of this has rarely percolated into policy thinking, or that of many employers. Paradoxically, McDowell does highlight in a number of examples that whilst some employers require total commitment and are blind to lives and imperatives beyond the workplace, others, notably supermarkets, sometimes design contracts around the care patterns of women staff (McDowell et al., 2005, p229). At the same time, as Jarvis argues, spatial planning, particularly around housing location, are blind to the realities of care (H. Jarvis, 1999, 2002, 2005b, 2005a, 2007, 2010; H. C. Jarvis, 1997).

In response to this set of questions, McKie, Gregory and Bowlby suggested the *caringscape* as an analytical tool and means of understanding the processes involved in managing and delivering care for household members and those beyond households over time and space:

*‘Embedded in caringscapes are different temporalities - for example, the temporality of the human life course with its different and differing dependencies (childhood, pregnancy, illness, old age and interaction with family and friends); the temporality of paid work career paths (within the context of regional, national and global economies) and the temporality of the daily routines of the people and institutions with whom a person habitually interacts (education, welfare, health and training).’ (McKie et al., 2002: 905)*

and that

*‘A caringscape perspective would consider the complexity of spatial-temporal frameworks and reflect a range of activities, feelings and reflective positions in the routes people map and shape through caring and working.’ (McKie et al., 2002: 914)*

As a framework, this has analytical and integrative power, and continues to be used and developed in the literature on caring (Bowlby, 2011, 2012; Edwards, 2019; Sihto, 2018, 2019).

## 2.5 Household Strategies: Understanding the Context

### 2.5.1 Coalfield Communities

Aerial photographs of the mining village of Upton, which lies within the Wakefield District, taken in 1927 show the new colliery being sunk at the same time as the council estate immediately adjacent was being built.



Plate 1. Upton Colliery, 1927

Plate 2. Upton, 1927

This shows clearly the development of communities specifically to serve an industry, with male employment and family homes located cheek-by-jowl. The organic links between the mining industry and the communities which depended on it have been widely documented (Dennis et al., 1969; Turner, 2000; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992a), and the impact of the mass closures following the 1984-1985 strike was also widely discussed

(Turner, 1993; Winterton & Winterton, 1989). The pit-closure programme of the 1980's and 1990's represents one of the most rapid and significant industrial changes within a developed country, described by Hetherington (Hetherington, 2014), as

*'de-industrialisation on a scale never experienced in Britain'*

The impact of the closure programme on communities was the focus of policy interest in the period between 1990 and 2005 (Coalfield Task Force, 1998; ODPM: Housing Planning Local Government Regions Committee, 2004; SQW, 2007) and was extensively discussed in academic literature (Bennett, Beynon, & Hudson, 2000; Beynon, Hudson, et al., 2004; Gore et al., 2007; Henderson & Shutt, 2004; Townsend & Hudson, 2005a).

Policy and academic interest in coalfield communities has now diminished. This is despite continuing economic underperformance in coalfield communities, highlighted by researchers such as Beatty and Fothergill who have maintained a focus on the difficulties of the UK's former industrial areas, ignoring the vagaries of current academic fashions (Christina Beatty et al., 2005; Foden, Fothergill, & Gore, 2014).

Fothergill and Beatty's research has consistently exposed the limits of coalfield regeneration programmes; and their critique was also shared by scholars from both Keynesian and Marxist traditions writing in the earlier years of what is sometimes described as 'New Labour'. Beynon, Hudson and Strangleman, for example, highlight the weaknesses of some local authority thinking, in a paper building on case studies in Mansfield, St Helens, East Durham and Rhondda-Cynon-Taff, with a focus on boosterism and image which they felt was naive (Beynon, Hudson, et al., 2004). Programmes and

policy focussed heavily on (admittedly necessary) site regeneration which was highly expensive, and much of the focus of funding for communities was on absorbing the impact of the loss of the contribution that the mining industry had made to sports and community facilities through the Coal Industry Social Welfare Organisation.

There was limited focus on connecting communities to wider economic opportunities. For political, institutional and emotional reasons, policy rested on assumptions that economic growth could be created within mining areas themselves, and connectivity was not addressed (Gore et al., 2007). A model of land reclamation, advanced factories and improved road transport links first pioneered in the Team Valley near Gateshead in the 1930s was repeated again and again across the British coalfield. Institutional critiques might have some value here - New Labour's Coalfields Programme was largely delivered by English Partnerships, which had been English Estates (and also drew on former Commission for New Towns staff), and was managed at operational level largely by Chartered Surveyors and Town Planners; with an organisational focus on physical regeneration and property development over many decades<sup>10</sup>.

Crucially, policy failed to see mining communities within a wider context<sup>11</sup>. As Townsend and Hudson suggested:

*'We can reasonably claim that the focus of coalfield research on mining villages has led to the exclusion of wider geography. Work has concentrated understandably on local Wards containing villages and parts of towns with a view to site reclamation*

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<sup>10</sup> English Partnerships became part of the Homes and Communities Agency in 2008, which in turn became Homes England in January 2018. The researcher worked for the agency from 2008 until 2012.

<sup>11</sup> The researcher concurs. Personal reading of every Economic Development Strategy prepared by Wakefield Council between 1988 and 2008 confirmed that the word 'Leeds' was never mentioned.

*and social facilities. This may have missed the bigger picture of seeing each mining District in a wider spatial context, particularly that of its immediate neighbours and their employment strengths' (Townsend & Hudson, 2005: 6).*

Although road links were improved and helped foster growth in the logistics industry, railway infrastructure remained substantially unchanged since Beeching, and at the time of revising this section<sup>12</sup>, railway commuters across the Yorkshire Coalfield still rely on the early-1980's Leyland National bus-conversions known as Pacers to get to work in Leeds or Sheffield. New Labour's coalfields programme failed to create a single metre of new electrified commuter railway.

Richard Florida and others have made claims to the importance of universities as foci for economic development, especially those with a strong Science, Technology Engineering and Maths component (Florida, 2002; Porter, 2004). Even if these claims are viewed with scepticism, the fact that the towns of Mansfield, Chesterfield, Barnsley, Doncaster, Wakefield, Wigan and St Helens do not muster a single local free-standing Higher Educational institution offering STEM subjects to PhD level between them makes the growth of local employment in technology fields less likely.

Whilst there were aspirations towards career change and development locally (Newby & Poulter, 2009), and well-planned and well-structured responses to colliery closure programmes under New Labour helped ex-miners secure employment in technologically related fields (Henderson & Shutt, 2004), the only programme which addressed the need to reshape and rebalance mining communities in depth was the much-maligned (and

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<sup>12</sup> February 2020.

truncated) Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder Programme, whose record of relative success repays further scrutiny (Cole, 2015; Ferrari, 2007, 2018; Fordham & Cole, 2009; Leather, Nevin, Cole, & Eadson, 2012).

In identifying the shortcomings of New Labour's Coalfields Programme, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee suggested:

*'We have serious concerns about the value for money of the coalfield initiatives. The Department does not know what improvement the initiatives had made to the lives of people living in the coalfield areas, as it does not have a robust assessment to prove to us the true number of additional jobs created. Nor does it know the business occupancy rates for employment space on the redeveloped sites, or the number of people from former coalfield communities who have benefited. The number of jobs the initiatives had helped to create could be anywhere between 8,000 and 16,000.'* (House of Commons Committee of Public Accounts, 2010: 3)

Helping understand what has really happened to coalfield communities in the decades since the mass closures of the 1980's and 1990's is therefore a key reason for undertaking this research. The study area is a former mining community in transition, and the nature of that transition depends on access to economic opportunity.

Historically, the story of extractive industries has been one of community abandonment. When the mines run out, miners and their families leave. Whether lead-mining in Wensleydale or tin-mining in Cornwall in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, or coal-mining in Ayrshire,



Somerset or the Forest of Dean in the 20<sup>th</sup>, people moved on, and towns and villages were either left to decline, or in some cases, obliterated. Mining workforces have historically been mobile, and migration from declining coalfields in areas such as Staffordshire is a feature of the eastern expansion of mining in Yorkshire in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Dean, 2013; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992b).

This was the pattern until the 1970's, with widespread transfers of miners from Scotland and Durham to Yorkshire. As Warwick and Littlejohn state:

*'Migration and mobility have to be seen as part of the texture of mining localities, and as variables which relate to the history of community process and institutions.'* (Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992a: 39)

This is no longer the case, with economic opportunities now constrained. The development of regional policy in the UK from the 1930's onwards saw attempts to provide alternative employment in mining areas, but with some exceptions, mining areas still under-perform in terms of job creation and business development. Adding to this, the development of a statutory land-use planning system, following the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act, makes the huge internal migrations experienced in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England impossible in the 21<sup>st</sup>. Compounding this, the loss of council housing through right-to-buy, and the absence of a large nationalised industry with a centralised approach to manpower deployment, means a move of the nature described by Douglass from the North East to South Yorkshire in 1968 can no longer take place (Douglass, 1977). American-style internal migrations, of the kind which emptied the mining areas of Appalachia and the Mountain West of much of their population do not happen in the UK.

Instead, people and families, particularly poorer people and poorer families, are locked where they are. Coalfield communities present, in one of its most extreme forms, the challenge for a Government economic policy that eschews both inter-regional financial transfers of the type which have previously been a feature of regional policy, and the use of regional and national approaches to spatial planning to shape development.

### **2.5.2 The Economy, Entrepreneurship and Economic Development**

A further area in which the study can make a contribution is an examination of the real potential of entrepreneurship and enterprise as the means by which declining communities are revived. The idea that communities can heal themselves through the creation of small businesses has had currency in the UK context since the 1980's with the re-casting of the role of the Department of Trade and Industry as a department for enterprise under Leon Brittan, Norman Tebbit, Lord Young and others, linked to the development of the Enterprise Allowance within the Department of Employment, also under Tebbit between 1981 and 1983. As such it represented a very clear application of free-market economic doctrines in the place of what were seen as the dirigiste enterprise policies under previous Labour and Conservative doctrines, and can be seen as a British manifestation of the Chicago School thinking that also informed US policy and IMF-imposed solutions in the developing world, notably Latin America.

Given the wide range of variables involved, identifying whether the policies were successful was difficult, although in the major longitudinal analysis of enterprise policy carried out at a local level in Teeside, the conclusions were that the periods of 'policy-off' (the 1970's and the 1990's under John Major) were actually characterised by greater business growth than in the 1980's (Greene, Mole, & Storey, 2004). Nevertheless, as with many other policy interventions, enterprise development has an impact both of itself, but also as part of a policy debate, and its place in wider discourses of social exclusion must also be accounted for (Peter Armstrong, 2005).

Authors such as Levitas argue that the place of 'community' in these discourses derives from different types of utopian thinking (Levitas, 2000) - communitarian, neo-liberal, social-democratic or Marxist. Similarly 'enterprise' and 'entrepreneurship' can also be seen as part of a neo-liberal utopian world-view. As well as being an economic concept, entrepreneurship is also a social and political one, and authors such as Armstrong have argued that its major relevance is discursive - those whom the discourse celebrates, and that which it condemns and criticises (Armstrong, 2005).

This general approach to enterprise makes seven major assumptions, implying a theory of change. The first is that the right to be an entrepreneur is a universal entitlement, and the second is that entrepreneurial potential exists in the areas in question. There is then a third assumption, that those enterprises will generate net employment gains; and that defined areas such as the New Deal for Communities and Local Enterprise Growth Initiative areas under New Labour are an appropriately bounded space for policy implementation. The fifth assumption is that markets exist for the enterprises which develop; and the sixth is that the programme and project interventions delivered by

policy through the state or its agents are the appropriate ones. Finally, there is an assumption that the policy represents a zero-sum game, with no potential casualties.

In addition, if pursued to the exclusion of other interventions, there is an implicit expectation that enterprise development represents a better choice than, for example, improving transport infrastructure as a means of improving employment prospects. Tested against both the empirical evidence of programme evaluation, as well as the relevant academic literature on business development and entrepreneurship, the validity of the approach has very serious limitations<sup>13</sup>. The fact that variants are dusted down with monotonous regularity at least once a decade (the New Enterprise Allowance, introduced in 2011 was at least the fourth outing in this researcher's lifetime; albeit the first as an observer, rather than as a critical delivery partner).

However, the entrepreneurship discourse does have the potential to highlight new approaches to developing the economic sustainability of communities and to valorise the creativity and imagination which are at the heart of community self-help, and mutual aid within localities. Where this presents problems for the entrepreneurship discourse is that it is motivated by altruism rather than the maximisation of utility<sup>14</sup>. Indeed, it can be argued that the very act of sustaining a family or household in difficult circumstances is itself an act of creativity, imagination and entrepreneurship.

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<sup>13</sup> The researcher's personal experience in the field of economic development, working for Wakefield Metropolitan District Council which covers the area in question is that the successful entrepreneurs moving through the council's managed workspace network, or participating in small business development programmes of various kinds, already have technical expertise and existing business networks. These conclusions are borne out in the academic literature (Rotefoss & Kolvereid, 2005; Shutt & Sutherland, 2003). For those without these, who had been caught up by the promotions of self-employment by Training and Enterprise Councils and JobCentre Plus, the most useful intervention was insolvency advice to protect homes, and other vital assets (which no-one bar Wakefield Council and the local Chamber of Commerce was interested in funding).

<sup>14</sup> Again, this was borne out in the authors personal experience, with community activists unhappy with views which characterised what they saw as an altruistic endeavour, as having any affinity whatsoever with profit-seeking business.

At the same time there is an ideological danger in the use of the term 'entrepreneurship' to describe these acts of creativity and imagination. Armstrong draws attention to a succession of pieces of shady practice on the part of heroic entrepreneurs such as Freddie Laker and Richard Branson (Armstrong, 2005), and Williams highlights the moral ambiguity of some entrepreneurial practice (Williams, 2007). The research approach needed to be sensitive to these phenomena, whilst at the same time recognising that entrepreneurship for some can be liberating and allow them to pursue interests and fulfil unfulfilled potential.

To summarise, there are a series of contextual issues related to regeneration and the economy in coalfield communities which have a potential impact on the choices respondents make about household strategies. These include the effectiveness and long-term impact of coalfield regeneration policies, the changing nature of local employment and the role of entrepreneurship in re-shaping economic structure.

### **2.5.3 Community**

The specific circumstances of coalfield communities have already been discussed in Section 2.5.1. This section examines aspects of the wider literature on communities, to give a perspective on how the location of a household within a community can help support it in developing its work strategy or hinder its implementation. First, however, it is important to define what is meant by community, and to be specific about the nature of the community under consideration. Communities can have geographical, social-

structural and interpretive dimensions; as well as a time dimension, changing or remaining static in nature (Crow & Allan, 1995).

Whilst it is recognised that the word 'community' can be applied to communities of interest, religious communities, or communities defined by ethnic origin, the prime focus in this study is on geographic communities; the collection of households and individuals in a particular place. The interest is in where people live, even though they may not have a particularly strong identification with it, a reflection both of the individual's life-patterns, but also of the social relations within that community which either include or exclude.

Studies of community have waxed and waned in importance in sociology, anthropology and in other disciplines, a path mapped by Morgan, Crow, Phillipson and Lewis amongst others (Charles & Crow, 2012; Lewis, 2016; Morgan, 2005; Phillipson, 2012). They draw attention to works which are widely recognised such as Pahl's Sheppey studies (Pahl, 1984), work focussed heavily on family and community such as that of Young (Young & Willmott, 1957), and rural communities such as Frankenberg's study of a village on the Welsh borders (Frankenberg, 1957). Strangleman has in turn written specifically about the literature focussing on mining communities (Strangleman, 2018); drawing attention to works beyond those of Dennis et. al. and Warwick and Littlejohn (Dennis et al., 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992a), including the work of Turner and Williamson (R. Turner, 2000; Williamson, 1982).

Williamson's account, focussing not just on work in mining, but also on the full range of activities in a household and the wider community in Throckley, Northumberland,

viewed through the lens of a biographical study of his own grandfather is a particularly nuanced and rich description of household practices in an inter-war mining community. Whilst aspects of that life were of their time, such as keeping pigs and other livestock on the family allotment and other rented land; others, such as allotment gardening are still a feature of many ex-mining communities today. Through reference to family history, Williamson also showed that these practices were rooted in an agrarian past, in his family's case in Norfolk.

Whilst not generally seen as within the specific remit of community studies literature, the work of both Hoggart and Jackson provide both useful context, as well as serving as a reminder of an era in which disciplinary boundaries in the social sciences were less strict (Hoggart, 1958; Jackson, 1972). Jackson's work, as well as focussing on changing attitudes and the ambiguous position of younger people moving away from traditional jobs and interests, also highlighted the importance of aspects of popular culture. Whilst Hoggart's 'The Uses of Literacy' is recognised for its focus on changing culture, it is also an account of a working-class upbringing in a working-class community; and like Jackson's work, highlights the cultural dislocation experienced by those who passed the 11 plus. It is also worth noting that Hoggart grew up and went to Cockburn Grammar School within a mile of a working colliery (Middleton in Leeds, shut in 1968)<sup>15</sup>.

Hoggart sets out what he sees as some truths about working-class life. Whilst he was writing in the 1950's, about a world which has in many ways since changed irrevocably,

<sup>15</sup> The researcher represented Hunslet, where Hoggart grew up, on Leeds City Council and held surgeries and community meeting in the library where Hoggart escaped home to read. Whilst situated within inner-city Leeds, its position south of the River Aire, and a historical inheritance of evangelical Christianity - Methodists, Primitive Methodists, Baptists, Salvationists, Oxford Movement Anglicans - meant that even in the 1990's its character was very different to what had historically been heavily Irish Catholic and Jewish communities in East Leeds just north of the river. Irish was spoken in parts of inner East Leeds well into the 1920's. Hunslet and the Belle Isle estate to its immediate south, on the other hand, had strong cultural similarities to adjacent coalfield communities and related to them.

his assertion still expresses widely-held views about working-class communities (Batty & Flint, 2013; Hanley, 2008; Matthews, 2015; McKenzie, 2015).

*'The more we look at working-class life, the more we try to reach the core of working-class attitudes, the more surely does it appear that the core is the sense of the personal, the concrete, the local: it is embodied in the idea of, first, the family and, second, the neighbourhood.'* (Hoggart, 1958: 33)

In studying communities, Hoggart's identification of the family is critical. Studying working-class communities inevitably involves a focus on working-class families as well.

At the same time, there is a need for caution. Levitas in particular highlights that 'community' is a contested term, and drawing attention to what she felt was its use by New Labour in policies on poverty and social exclusion to move away from redistributionist policies (Levitas, 2000, 2005). However, both Hanley in her discussion of growing up in Chelmsley Wood, Solihull, and McKenzie in her discussion of St Ann's in Nottingham are clear that identity came consciously from the community, and it is also the researcher's experience in both inner-city Leeds and the mining villages of Wakefield (Hanley, 2008; McKenzie, 2015). Whilst the local and national state might have wanted to see community identity in somewhere like Belle Isle in Leeds as a vehicle for resolving its social and economic problems, Belle Isle people saw it as where they were from, and the network of ties that bound them to family, friends and neighbours.

Rich, dense and spatially bounded family networks are a feature of these communities, highlighted in much of the literature, and resonate with the kind of close East End



working-class family network discussed by authors such as Young, and revisited by Phillipson et al. has already been highlighted (Dennis et al., 1969; Phillipson et al., 2001; Young & Willmott, 1957). There is a great deal in common between both Young and Willmott's description of family life and kinship in East London in the 1950's, and the nature of family relationships described by Slaughter et. al. in the mining town of "Ashton"<sup>16</sup> in the 1950's. Young and Willmott describe people choosing to live near their families, and point out

*'The Bethnal Greener is therefore surrounded not only by his own relatives and acquaintances, but also by his own acquaintances and their relatives.'* (Young & Willmott, 1957: 105)

Slaughter et. al. also describe similar practices in Ashton

*'These contacts with neighbours and relatives form the foremost part of the Ashton mother's extra-familial life.... Besides her neighbours the typical housewife in Aston will see a good deal of her kinsfolk. Among the older established families, the visiting of relatives is a well-developed institution.'* (Dennis et al., 1969: 203-204)

Whilst both these pieces of research were undertaken in the 1950's at the same time that Hoggart was writing, and new working practices, growing car-ownership and the changing position of women had an impact, the patterns, in particular the importance of

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<sup>16</sup> Ashton is actually the town of Featherstone, which lies just over seven kilometers from the study village.

family, remain in more recent research in working-class communities (Ward et al., 2007). Neighbours also have importance, although as Bridge et. al. suggest:

*‘Much that is important about neighbouring seems to lie in the potential or latent qualities that can be activated should the need arise.’* (Bridge, Forrest, & Holland, 2004: 39)

Nevertheless, solidarity is not universal, including family-based solidarity. Exclusionary practices are described in other contexts, most notably by Norbert Elias, in an analysis of conflict and ill-feeling between long-standing and new residents in a Leicester community, and the mechanisms that created it (Elias & Scotson, 1994). Elias’s thinking has subsequently shaped work by other scholars on attitudes to gypsies and travellers (Powell, 2008), and relationships within an urban community in South Wales (Swann & Hughes, 2016). Savage reflects on related issues (M. Savage, 2008), focussing less on conflict and exclusionary activity, building on work by other authors such as Brian Jackson (Jackson, 1972).

Two processes are at work. The first process is what Elias describes as the processes of micro-sociality which either include or exclude people from a dominant local culture, and where even nuances of language or modes of speaking can mark people out.

In terms of language, Ballyhenry, the research site, lies in a part of England where the second person singular (*‘thee’* and *‘tha’*) is still used extensively in everyday conversation, and where local dialect is still spoken widely, and seen as part of local

identity. In a culture which is overwhelmingly oral, and shaped by chat and talk, sharing language is important. Language, and the way that it is used is identified by Bernstein as class-based, with working-class communities adopting what Bernstein describes as restricted codes (Bernstein, 1971), contributing to what Robertson has described as a strongly class-based place identity in the context of an examination of communities in Stirling (Robertson, 2013). Interestingly, Robertson identifies the separate character of mining communities as a factor within the city of Stirling.

The second process is the concept of 'elective belonging' described by Savage et al., with people developing increasingly complex identification with place:

*'Our concept of elective belonging argues that places are not characterised by tensions between insiders and outsiders but that instead they are defined as locales for people electing to belong (and not just reside) in specific places.'* (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2004: 11)

and that:

*'Belonging should be seen neither in existential terms (as primordial attachment to some kind of face-to-face community), nor as discursively constructed, but as a socially constructed, embedded process in which people reflexively judge the suitability of a given site as appropriate given their social trajectory and their position in other fields.'* (Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2004: 22)

They identify that people in the communities they studied in England's North West increasingly had family, professional or social networks beyond the locality, and attachments elsewhere: although they also identified significant degrees of difference between localities; with residents in the former mill-town of Ramsbottom much more locally connected than those living in the Manchester suburb of Chorlton-cum-Hardy, which even at the time of the fieldwork (between 1997 and 1999) was a highly diverse place where residents had a much wider range of connections.

Their research has been developed by the authors in other published work, notably in their paper on differing attitudes to parental involvement in parent teacher associations in two Cheshire communities, Cheadle and Wilmslow (Bagnall, Longhurst, & Savage, 2003). In more middle-class Wilmslow, parents, many of whom were incomers, sought to build social capital through the generation of loose social networks based around their children and their education. This, it is suggested both connected them to people who shared their interests and values, as well as to the schools they thought would help their children 'get ahead'. For working-class parents in Cheadle on the other hand, these:

*'...generally less mobile respondents use their more local habitus to generate bonding forms of social capital with tighter social networks based around, kin, residence and leisure that enable them to 'get by'.'* (Bagnall et al., 2003: 14)

The development of close social networks is identified as building what Granovetter describes as strong ties (Granovetter, 1973). They also note that the routines of managing work and childcare were more complex for both women and men in Cheadle, reflecting a reliance on patterns of childcare that depended on support from friends and relatives. In Cheadle, whilst men were happy to be involved in children's activities, particularly relating to soccer, they were wary about involvement with school, which they saw as 'not for them'. It could be suggested that this reflects working-class male attitudes to education also noted by other authors from Hoggart onwards (Hanley, 2008, 2016; Hoggart, 1958; Jackson, 1972). At the same time, schools can be an important focus for village life and the integration of newcomers, as highlighted in the case of a rural village in County Durham by Hillyard and Bagley; although this contrasted with a rural village in Norfolk dominated by retired people (Hillyard & Bagley, 2015).

In this context, in developing the notion of elective belonging, it is also useful to recognise Watt's development of the concept of elective belonging, *selective belonging*, in his research on an East London suburb. In this case he identified a conscious process of middle-class disaffiliation amongst residents in a recently developed private sector estate from the rest of their local community, which was primarily working-class. Watt also identifies clear differences between these middle-class residents, many of whom were small business-people, shopkeepers and first-generation professionals, and better-educated middle-class residents in inner-London suburbs (Watt, 2009).

*'The deep need amongst the Woodlands residents to draw a strict boundary between their oasis and the other Eastside, a process of psychosocial splitting, also*

*reflects the uncertain, unfinished nature of their own middle-class habitus.'* (Watt, 2009: 2890).

The research of Savage, Bagnall and Longhurst raises underlying issues of family contact, family proximity and time in a locality (Bagnall, Longhurst, & Savage, 2003; M. Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2001; N. Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2004). These are recognised in wider literature related to childcare, working arrangements and family relationships (Innes & Scott, 2003; H. Jarvis, 2002, 2005a; H. C. Jarvis, 1997; McKinsey Global Institute, 1998; Millar, 2007; Skinner, 2003), it does not feature as a significant factor in research on issues such as household work strategies and the use of the informal economy. This reflected prevailing preferences in working-class communities of this nature for childcare within the wider family, as highlighted in a range of research (Alakeson, 2012; Valle, Arthur, Millward, & Scott, 2002; Wheelock & Jones, 2002)<sup>17</sup>. A similar pattern is also reported by Ghate and Hazel in research with families in stressed circumstances, where for most of the parents they interviewed, their own mothers were the major source of help (Ghate & Hazel, 2004: 14).

The literature also highlights the impact of the changing geography of families, with a much greater tendency to live long distances from each other (Phillipson et al., 2001). This phenomenon, and its impact on issues such as care within families has been examined extensively in a European context by Mulder and others (de Meester et al., 2011; Mulder & Kalmijn, 2005; Mulder & Malmberg, 2014; Mulder & van der Meer, 2009), although this research is predicated on access to datasets such as the Netherlands

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<sup>17</sup> Also borne out in the author's work which Surestart centres and other childcare projects, where there was a marked reluctance on the part of many lower-income mothers to contemplate childcare provided by non-family members.

Kinship Panel Study which are difficult to create in the UK context (Smith, 2011). Despite changing geographies, families and family ties are still important, as identified by Duncan and Smith, in spite of popular and press commentary that suggests the decline of the institution's importance (Duncan & Smith, 2006).

#### **2.5.4 Poverty and Disadvantage**

The relationship between poverty, disadvantage and place has been an enduring feature of British writing on sociology and social policy from Engels, Rowntree and the Webbs onwards. In recent decades there has been a focus on the question of area effects, with a large number of authors highlighting aspects of the relationship between deprivation and locality, and the reality or otherwise of area effects (Atkinson & Kintrea, 2001; Fordham & Cole, 2009; Lupton, 2003; Lupton, Power, Glennerster, & Noden, 1999; G. R. Smith, 1999; Tunstall & Lupton, 2003). Others have counterposed the need for a universalist approach to welfare against a policy focus on areas of concentrated disadvantage (Levitas, 2000; Watt & Jacobs, 2000). The latter can be understood in the context of the long-standing Marxist and Fabian commitments to universalism, although this needs to be tempered with recognition that working class communities can be more concerned with cheating and undeserving neighbours than with redistribution and tax evasion by the rich (Atkinson & Flint, 2004; Batty & Flint, 2013).

Much of the rest of the academic literature on neighbourhoods relates closely to the realities of housing renewal, regeneration programmes, and community-based employment, training and economic development. Arguments around universalism take

place at a level 'up there', seemingly beyond the influence of communities, practitioners and the researchers who study them. Matters are complicated by an evidence base derived from contract research and evaluation undertaken in support of Government regeneration programmes from City Challenge and the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB) onwards, with a particularly strong focus on area-based initiatives such as the SRB, the New Deal for Communities, and the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative in the early and middle years of New Labour. Developing a broad understanding of the operation of neighbourhood effects is complicated by the partial nature of this evidence base; influenced as it is by detail of where the funding was, what the eligibility criteria were, and whether there was a commitment or requirement for external evaluation.

In Wakefield this included work in support of SRB programmes, the Health Action Zone, and work by Wakefield District Housing to achieve the Department for Communities and Local Government's 'Decency' standard in rented social housing all of which had a strong neighbourhood focus, and were evaluated by academics (Hickman, Walshaw, Ferrari, Gore, & Wilson, 2011). A key difficulty is the shift from 2007 onwards in Government focus, with a move in emphasis from area-based explanations of poverty and disadvantage to a more individualised pathology, carried forward in approaches to troubled families under the Coalition. With significant reductions in levels of funding for housing, regeneration and economic development, and a diminished commitment to evidence-based policy, the opportunities for research in localities continues to diminish.

In addition, key areas in neighbourhood disadvantage research remain under-explored, with a partial literature in terms of both policy evaluation and academic journals. The main area of deficiency is in relation to the nature of local economies in disadvantaged



areas. The major regeneration programme evaluation under New Labour, the NDC National Evaluation features only one contribution looking at enterprise (Devins, Walton, & Bickerstaffe, 2005). This was because, although the programme had a clear commitment to a national quantitative and qualitative evaluation, based on a 'Theories of Change' approach, enterprise and business development was not identified as a key area for the programme activity at inception. By contrast, the major enterprise programme for disadvantaged areas, the Local Enterprise Growth Initiative, had no agreed national baseline, and a national evaluation that was only commissioned well after the programme started (Amion Consulting, 2010; Regeneris Consulting, 2008). This lack of coherence continued under the coalition, with no discernible national evaluation of the New Enterprise Allowance programme by DWP. In the circumstances, the most developed piece of policy thinking remains the Social Exclusion Unit's report 'Jobs and Enterprise in Deprived Areas' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2004), and the major summary of evaluation evidence on economic regeneration in disadvantaged areas is 'Policy Interactions and Outcomes in Deprived Areas' (Haughton & Trinniman, 2005).

There has been a paucity of recent evaluation evidence on regeneration programmes, although Overman, Lawless and Tyler have usefully synthesized some of the evidence from New Labour programmes such as the New Deal for Communities programme (Lawless, Overman, & Tyler, 2011). Overman suggests that regeneration policy should be assessed primarily by its impact on people, and their economic prospects, not places (Overman, 2011). He also suggests that policies focussed on neighbourhood regeneration tend to provide public goods but not economic development; and there is no evidence that they contribute to narrowing the gaps between disadvantaged places or individuals

and other people and areas. Again, examining the circumstances of households can potentially explain whether this is the case.

## **2.5.5 Space and Place**

This section looks at two things. First, it considers what space and place mean, and draws on both academic literature and the researcher's personal perspectives to flesh this out, setting directions and intentions for the rest of the study. Second, it considers some aspects of spatial policy and spatial approaches which bear on the study, and indicates ways in which those can relate to households and their work strategies.

### **2.5.5.1 Understandings of Space and Place**

There is a lengthy academic literature on space and place, and it is not intended to rehearse those debates at length. Rather, the focus in this section will be on literature which helps give some wider context to questions of place and space and their impact on households and their work strategies. Space is understood in a wide range of ways both academically and non-academically, whether as a two or three dimensional area with a clear extent; as an unbounded area or infinite expanse (such as the universe) in which objects are situated; or in metaphorical, figurative or symbolic terms. As Harvey puts it:

*'Space is, of course, one of those words that frequently elicits modification. The complications perhaps arise more out of the modifications (which all too frequently get omitted in the telling or the writing) rather than out of any inherent complexity of the notion of space itself. When, for example, we write of "material", "metaphorical", "liminal", "personal", "social" or "psychic" space (just to take a few examples) we thereby indicate a considerable diversity of contexts which so inflect matters as to seem to render the meaning of space itself entirely contingent upon the context.'* (Harvey, 2004: 1)

Dovey, following Lefebvre (Lefebvre, 1991), highlights space's uniqueness as a concept:

*'it is at once a means of production and a commodity; both a social product and a medium of social reproduction and control'* (Dovey, 2008: 52)

Lefebvre's critical Marxist definition also needs to take note of the additional dimension of the space-time described by Einstein which also appears in scholarship in other disciplines. Space used within the disciplines of geography, planning and housing studies can also usefully take note of the definitions offered by Harvey and Whaley (Harvey, 1973; Whaley, 2018). Harvey suggests a triad of absolute, relative, and relational space, where no one conception is necessarily superior to the others (Harvey, 1973). Instead, they can be used as:

*'a mix of means to understand events occurring around us and to formulate ways of thinking and theorizing about geographical phenomena and processes'* (Harvey, 2004: 4)

and that:

*'one may employ absolute space to analyse configurations of private property; relative space to develop transport maps based not on absolute distance between places but on variables such as cost, time, and energy; and relational space to analyse such things as 'the political role of collective memory in urban processes' (Harvey, 2004: 5)*

Massey's writing on space took a different, and consciously less precise approach to space, which she saw primarily in terms of relationships and flows (Massey, 2005). For her there were three underlying propositions in understanding space: first, that space is the product of interrelations; second, that multiplicity is integral to the concept of space; and finally that space as a phenomenon is always open to the future and always under construction. The openness of Massey's approach to definition has been questioned by a number of other scholars, notably Malpas (Malpas, 2012). Discussing Massey's view of space (and those of Amin, which have much in common (Amin, 2004) , Malpas suggests that Massey's view of space and spatiality:

*'can be taken as representative of (and is certainly an important influence on) what is now the dominant view of space and spatiality within geography and many related disciplines - a view of space and spatiality as essentially relational.'* (Malpas, 2012: 228)

He suggests that part of the appeal of her imaginative frameworks are the excitement they evoke, which are resistant to clear and precise analysis. Indeed:

*'...it is as much their rhetorical and imaginative abundance that is attractive as any genuinely new insights to which they give rise.'* (Malpas, 2012: 228)

There are, perhaps, shades of the earlier discussion of social and other capitals: multifarious; imprecise and not actually capital in any sense Marx, Marshall, Schumpeter or Hayek would recognise. In this research the approach taken to space will be simpler and hopefully more precise, adopting the view of Harvey that space can be absolute, relative or relational. This then begs the question of how to define place. Dovey suggests:

*'It is common to see place as an experiential phenomenon defined in opposition to space: a location experienced as meaningful within a larger spatial context.'*  
(Dovey, 2008: 45)

Even Massey argues that place has specificity (Massey, 2005: 130), although confounds this to a degree in worked examples of Kilburn High Road and a walk on Skiddaw, where she describes both spaces as essentially transient and relational. Whilst this approach is problematic, it has real rhetorical value, and Massey's work forces the reader to confront the transient nature of current reality as well as the shifting geological, historical and socio-political forces bearing on it. Malpas reinforces this (Malpas, 2012), suggesting that although Massey retains a concept of place in her work, this is largely as a meeting-place of relational flows and trajectories, with Massey suggesting that this sense of place is 'reactionary' in that it requires the drawing of boundaries. These

boundaries then require the definition of an “inside” and an “outside”, and an “us” and “them” (Massey, 2005: 152).

In the context of this research, whilst the work of Massey and others will inform how questions of place are considered: the general approach adopted will be more specific. Place is where people are, their feelings about that, and also the memories they carry of other places they have known before. At this point Tomaney’s view, that even in a globalised era scholars need to focus on ‘*dwelling*’ as well as ‘*movement*’ is important (Tomaney, 2013: 661). He identifies that despite frequent uses of terms like ‘local’ there are very few detailed analyses of how local identities and attachments are produced; but:

*‘On the other hand, the literature on the ‘relational’ region builds strongly on a normative commitment to cosmopolitan values in which ‘the basic rhetorical opposition between the liberal cosmopolitan and the illiberal local remains influential’ (Tomaney, 2013: 661)*

Tomaney explores these issues through literature, contrasting Massey’s description of Skiddaw as ephemeral and changing, with that of Wordsworth who saw it as looming, shaping and monumental. He draws also from the writing of Seamus Heaney and Patrick Kavanagh. For this rootless, citizen-of-nowhere researcher, Heaney’s writing and that of Patrick Kavanagh pull the cosmopolitanism up short, creating moments of overwhelming rootedness and connection. In Kavanagh’s “The Great Hunger”, that connection is with generations of ancestors on his father’s side who farmed in County Monaghan, as well as one of his own boyhood summers digging potatoes:

*'Clay is the word and clay is the flesh/Where the potato-gatherers like mechanised scarecrows move/Along the side-fall of the hill - Maguire and his men.'* (Kavanagh, 1942)

Another poem, considered by Watterson in a discussion of Seamus Heaney and place (Watterson, 2016), "Two lorries", also conjures connection, locality and place for both Watterson, and the researcher:

*'And the last delivery. Oh, Magherafelt!/Oh, dream of red plush and a city coalman/As time fastforwards and a different lorry/Groans into shot, up Broad Street, with a payload/That will blow the bus station to dust and ashes.../After that happened, I'd a vision of my mother,/A revenant on the bench where I would meet her/In that cold-floored waiting room in Magherafelt,/Her shopping bags full up with shovelled ashes./Death walked out past her like a dust-faced coalman/Refolding body-bags, plying his load/Empty upon empty, in a flurry'* (Heaney, 1998: 403)

As a child the researcher would sit in the window of his grandmother's house opposite that bus station, watching buses arriving and departing. In that same station Heaney would meet his mother on his returns from school in Derry in the 1950's. Outside that station in May 1993, a lorry-bomb exploded and destroyed much of Broad Street, including the home where his grandmother had lived until her death and his grandfather had practised law. Place can be very specific: that few square yards of Broad Street,

laid out by the Salter's Company during the Plantation of Ulster is redolent with centuries of meaning.

Language itself also evokes place, marking it as special and personal. Watterson suggests

*'Were I to draw a map of the child-world that fed my daydreams, I would mark on it the places of Seamus Heaney's poems, their pronunciation "difficult to manage" with handfuls of craftily placed consonants and vowels at once keeping strangers apart from and a part of the Moyola River and Magherafelt, of Anahorish, Bellaghy and Broagh, where my mother grew up.'* (Watterson, 2016)

These are also this researcher's words; the act of pronunciation an evocation of townlands for whose inhabitants his grandfather and uncle drew up wills, established title, appeared at Petty Sessions and instructed Counsel over most of a century; just as townland-names like Magherascouse, Ballyaltikilligan and Ballyalloly are where his father drove to visit dental patients at home; and Fev, Elmsall, Ponte, Cas and Normie, not Featherstone, South Elmsall, Pontefract, Castleford and Normanton are where the researcher did his work and learnt to say '*tha knows*'. In this research, place is specific; and, aware of how the sight of a turning furrow or the sound of a burn in spate turns the researcher from someone rootless to someone absolutely rooted, there is a commitment to listening for the meanings of place for others.



### 2.5.5.2 Space and Policy

At the same time, space and place are also the field of policy interest and activity, fields less susceptible to literary illumination. In practical terms, the outworking of policy can result in locations which are sub-optimal. People's living choices can be shaped by their need to balance migration and commuting, and this is in turn shaped by the interaction of housing markets and the land-use planning process at particular stages in time.

In terms of internal migration and the pressure to commute, the work of Green, Champion and others are crucial (Champion, 2009; Champion, Coombes, & Brown, 2009; Green, Hogarth, & Shackleton, 1999; Jarvis, 1999, 2007, 2010; Paper, Champion, & Coombes, 2012; Wadsworth, 1998). Workers in the UK are commuting longer distances, and in many cases do not have the option of affordable housing near their workplaces. There are phenomena which have not yet been the sustained focus of academic study which are nevertheless important; and are borne out by both observation and discussions with individuals working in other fields - the dependence on internal flights across the UK for individuals working in the offshore industry in Scotland's North East, for example; or the Transit vans in any Premier Inn or Travelodge on a weekday morning betokening a large mobile specialist workforce without which shops do not get fitted out, steelwork is not done, or tunnels are not driven under London. This happens in part because of the attachments mentioned in the previous section - place, and home, matters - but also because of pressures in the planning system to restrict residential development where jobs and economic opportunities arise (Cheshire, 2009; Cheshire, Hilber, & Koster, 2018; Hilber & Vermeulen, 2014; Matthews et al., 2015).

Questions related to work and commuting linked into a wider consideration of the local and regional economy (Newby & Poulter, 2009), in particular within the wider context of the continuing problems of older industrial regions in the UK and beyond (Birch, MacKinnon, & Cumbers, 2010; Fothergill, 2001; Haughton & Trinniman, 2005; Ray Hudson, 2005; Porter, 2004). Newby and Poulter identify problems of dysfunctional geography within the wider area of which the study location is a part, in particular the lack of higher order settlements; as well as poor connectivity; shortcomings in terms of skills; and industrial growth constrained by sectors with some long-term problems such as logistics and call-centres. They also highlight a lack of a culture of aspiration in terms of education, training and ambitions for entrepreneurship locally. Their assessment is supported by wider scholarship, with Gore and others highlighting the limited spatial horizons of many local residents in terms of employment aspirations (Gore et al., 2007; Gore & Hollywood, 2009), and Lawless et. al. questioning the realism of some place-based policy prescriptions (Lawless et al., 2011), questions which will be addressed in more depth in Chapter 4.

The arguments around the constricting nature of green belt policies in the South East have been extensively outlined by Cheshire and others (Cheshire, 2009; Cheshire et al., 2018; C. A. L. Hilber, 2010; C. a. L. Hilber & Vermeulen, 2014; Lawless et al., 2011). The most extensive piece of work commissioned by Government in recent decades on housing supply, the Barker Review (Barker, 2006), identified the planning system as the main cause of inelasticity in housing supply in England and Wales. At the same time, local authorities such as Wakefield released land for housing development to maintain

the viability of villages with poor public transport access, limited access to local services such as retail or childcare, and little prospect of improving them.

Whilst all these key themes would benefit from data from up-to-date research, there are a number of additional areas where much of the published literature makes only a limited contribution. The question of mobility is crucial. The work of Champion, Green and others has already been discussed, and it reveals much. However, highlighting extent and flows can only infer expected impacts on households and families. How and why individuals get to places and choose places is actually a key element of their household work strategies, with Helen Jarvis the only researcher who has looked at this issue in the granular detail which only qualitative inquiry reveals, in her research on better-off young families in England and the US (Jarvis, 2005b). Her wider work is a critical contribution to understanding the importance of the spatial dimension in shaping household work strategies (Jarvis, 2005b, 2005a; Jarvis, 1997); and initially suggested in Warde's research on households in England's North West (Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993). Proximity is a critical factor in the involvement of other family members in household work strategies, and family presence locally makes involvement in household strategies as either a donor or receiver of assistance more likely.

## **2.6 Conclusions and Research Questions**

This chapter has placed the researcher's intellectual journey in context, and has outlined what the researcher regards as models of academic writing in general and social science writing in particular. It then moved on to questions of definition, clarifying how the informal economy and household strategies are understood and has examined

the key literature on them, especially in a UK context. The criticisms of Pahl's original use of the term 'strategy' to describe the aggregate of practices undertaken by households to meet their needs were discussed; and whilst it was recognised that the term strategy has become a catch-all used to describe a wide range of processes and activities that involve some degree of deliberation on balance it was recognised that Pahl's use of the word was appropriate and useful.

The contested question of social capital was also examined. The position adopted in this research is that it is regrettable that the term social capital has come into use to describe attributes, skills, knowledge, relationships and networks which cannot be owned or hired; have no market; cannot be used as collateral; cannot be readily bought and sold; or cannot be measured. The same view is taken on other forms of capital such as cultural capital. Whilst the use of 'capital' as a shorthand arguably diminishes and over-simplifies a wide range of phenomena which deserve study and description in their own right, it is nevertheless recognised that as with 'strategy', Canute-like resistance is futile, and the term social capital will be used in the rest of this thesis, although with the caveat that other more specific terminology will be used where possible.

Some key elements have been identified, which shape thinking around the direction of the research process. These include the persistence or otherwise of non-commodified solutions to meeting household needs, and the potential role of families and social networks in facilitating these, as well as whether the concept of the household strategy maintains its validity almost two decades after Wallace argued for its continuing importance (Wallace, 2002). There is also the potential to consider the continuing

importance of informal economic activity in the light of the growth of agency working in fields such as logistics.

Further questions including the impact of gender divisions within household work strategies, and the role of women in orchestrating household strategies were also raised, and need to be considered within the research approach; as can the particular features of coalfield communities, and the impact of the wider policy environment. In this question the impact of austerity may be particularly important. There are significant gaps in terms of recent knowledge in these areas, as well as an absolute paucity of research on issues such as care within household strategies, and place-related impacts such as the role of mobility and local assets. In the next chapter, the research questions and the literature will be related to questions of methodology and method, and the research approach will be outlined.

The first two sections of the literature review have highlighted significant gaps in the literature on the informal economy and household work strategies, and a very specific absence of research on household strategies in coalfield communities since the early part of the last decade. It is these which are the central focus of this research. Whilst it is recognised that there are other gaps which could also be addressed - the relative absence of recent ethnographic studies of coalfield communities and other declining industrial communities in England for example - the risk is that the study could attempt to undertake too comprehensive a survey of the warp and weft of communities and their economies.

This study's intention was to maintain a specific focus on these questions of how, at the most basic level households in former mining villages interact with the wider economy.

What was envisaged was not the thick description envisioned by Geertz (Geertz, 2000), valuable though this is in many contexts, but a tightly focussed study of households. For this reason, a set of research questions, which nevertheless allowed the gathering of relevant appropriate and illuminating contextual information were developed. These are:

- What work strategies are used by households to meet their needs in a former mining village in Yorkshire?
- Why are these work strategies adopted by households?
- What can a study of these strategies add to existing studies of, and policy towards, household work strategies?

Nevertheless, the discussion so far of coalfield communities, and the wider consideration of disadvantaged areas has also highlighted a number of key themes which start to answer some of the questions posed by Pahl and Crow et al. as discussed in Chapter 1 (Crow et al., 2009; Pahl, 1984).

For example, one of the reasons why former mining communities 'are where they are' is because decisions about their location determined by geology, the advance of mining technologies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, and Victorian England's laissez-faire approach to land-use planning at that stage now come up against the rigidities enforced by a restrictive planning system imposed in the UK since 1947. Even if they wanted to leave, many people in these communities have in reality little more freedom to move to take

up new economic opportunities than serfs in pre-1861 Russia or black South Africans in the era of Bantustans and the Group Areas Act.

Those who remain in those communities must now rely on their own internal resources; or the limited economic opportunities that are within commuting distance, in a national economy where the large scale population transfers of the past are no longer possible. This is compounded by the relative weakness of the recovery of local economies in the coalfields since the mass colliery closures of the early 1990's; which compound the decline of coalfields relative to national national economic trends since the early 1920's (Beatty, Fothergill, & Lawless, 1997; Crafts, 2011; O'Donnell, 1988).

The next chapter will outline the methods and the research process which were used to answer these questions, and the methodology which shaped them. In examining this, the research also needs to specifically consider gender, family scheduling and household management, care, and the role of social networks. In addition the question of the balance between commodified and non-commodified approaches needs to be addressed, along with the role of paid favours, if any. Consumption work also requires investigation, along with the contextual issue of austerity.

The impact of austerity highlights a further issue which has already been discussed, and which probably represents the key gap in the literature, the absence of recent qualitative work that examines the impact of changes since the middle of the last decade. Within that issues like mobility are important, and so is the impact of austerity, which has significantly reduced investment in coalfield communities; but so is

understanding a wide range of other impacts, such as technological change. So too is understanding areas which previous research did not examine in depth, particularly the impact of care on household strategies, where although there has been work on care *sui generis*, research in the field has tended not to place it within context. Those gaps in turn shape a set of research questions which recognise the breadth of the topic, but which are supported by an approach which elicits information on them.



## **3. Methods, Methodology and the Research Process**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter will address the practical issues of how the research was conducted, as well as placing this work within the context of methodological thinking, and set out a series of analytical frameworks within which to consider the evidence. In addition, household work strategies, particularly where they involve participation in or use of the informal economy, raise specific issues in terms of ethics. These ethical issues are discussed, as well as questions of reflexivity specific for the research and the researcher. These also link to the case study approach of the research and what this implies for the methods to be adopted. Previous research in the field of the informal economy has used qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches.

A two-stage approach was used, with an initial stakeholder interview with two local councillors, informal discussions with council staff, and documentary and web research into the history and geography of the village and the surrounding area. This was followed by a series of 17 qualitative interviews in Ballyhenry. It was originally hoped to follow these up with a limited number of repeat interviews with some respondents, but this did not prove feasible within the time available.

## 3.2 The Research Journey

Before discussing methods and methodology in detail, placing this in the context of a research journey is important. Just as the review of the literature drew from three stages of the researcher's life and work, so the development of methods thinking drew from the same three stages: work experience; the research undertaken as part of a Masters dissertation and the preliminary thinking that informed the development of the research questions for the current work; and finally the actual process of preparation, fieldwork and analysis undertaken by the researcher. Research, and the evidence from research has been part of the researcher's professional and political life since the mid-1980's; as both a user of research and as its commissioner.

As with the decision to 'do' research, specific episodes also shaped how the researcher conceives of research. Two particular episodes come to mind. The more recent was in a meeting to discuss stretch targets for the Round Two Local Area Agreements being agreed between the Government and local authorities across Yorkshire and the Humber in 2005/6 (Department for Communities and Local Government, 2006, 2007). The researcher attended as Wakefield's officer lead on worklessness, with a remit to commission and manage programmes focussing on individuals drawing invalidity-related benefits; with a particular concentration on a small number of super-output areas where these benefit claims were concentrated. Much of the meeting was unmemorable, but fifteen years on what still strikes was the Government Office Regional Director's

repeated and firm assertions that what was needed to drive activity was the labour market intelligence, management information and performance data provided by the Department of Work and Pensions.

At one level this was authoritative: the figures added up, but were DWP counting the right things? The researcher had witnessed over more than a decade the struggles of DWP and its predecessors with its information systems, as well as its consistent choice to measure those figures which were most favourable both to itself as a department and to its contractors. Hence a focus on people into jobs, rather than retaining jobs after one year or two years, or on job advancement. When ministers did attempt to innovate or shift direction, the response was to place the area of innovation into a cordon sanitaire, presumably in the expectation that by the time the programme was evaluated, the minister would have moved on (Casebourne & Coleman, 2012; Chowdry, 2012).

More importantly, most of the participants at the meeting knew from experience that taking this approach, and aligning with DWP's existing programmes and strategy, were unlikely to achieve the radical change which the Government's expectations of Local Area Agreements implied. Most civil servants agreed. The researcher had also been involved in the more innovative approaches possible with these client groups working outside DWP's contracting frameworks; as well as the more outcome-focussed frameworks required in the NHS's clinical governance regime. Different and better approaches were possible, but doing so involved a shift in approach to that adopted by DWP.

Two factors were at work. First, for those working in local government, there was the experience of working in a nimbler and more innovative environment. Political clearance for the researcher involved a quick discussion with a portfolio-holder or senior officer to get 'steer', an exchange of e-mails, and a file note. Decisions to bid for external resources, or to shift the focus of programmes could be taken in days. For civil servants, the process was glacial; and accountability was both opaque and well-removed from operational delivery.

However, this was not the key factor. What the meeting illustrated to the researcher was the extent to which numbers are frequently a comfort blanket for civil servants. In another context, Elliott assesses the impact of the huge volume of information produced by the RAND corporation to support the U.S. Department of Defense:

*'At its most influential, RAND's research reinforced what policymakers were already inclined to do, encouraged them to believe that they were on the right track, and motivated them to persist in doing what they were doing or to do more of the same. The research also served as an additional arrow in their quivers to persuade the president or their colleagues that the course of action they proposed or were undertaking was correct and would produce results.'* (Elliott, 2010:viii)

Elliott estimates that between 1950 and the US defeat in Vietnam, RAND produced at least 500 reports on Vietnam itself, along with 60 on Laos and 100 on Thailand; virtually

all involving huge volumes of numerical data. During the New Labour years, DWP produced almost similar volumes of Research Reports, again mostly involving significant volumes of quantitative data. It is open to question whether any created a significant culture change in DWP, which remains from the researcher's point of view a command and control bureaucracy with a largely similar culture to that which they first encountered in 1986.

Engaging with qualitative research on the other hand; or critically reflecting on personal experience involves an engagement with that 'personal'. In a politically-led environment, it involves speaking truth to power, and clarity about both positionality and discussions about who has a right to a voice<sup>18</sup>. Dispassionate positivism, on the other hand, is much safer. In the researcher's experience of commissioning research over more than two decades, some comforting and reassuring numbers allow a gradual approach to the difficult issues. And, of course, often those numbers are genuinely revelatory, for example when initial quantitative research carried out in areas of high unemployment in Wakefield showed that unemployment was not actually an issue of concern for local people, including those it affected. What mattered was actually crime, although the local rates were low, and the state of the local environment which was by any assessment reasonably clean and well-maintained.

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<sup>18</sup> The frustrating thing was that the Government Office's Regional Director was not a calculating automaton. They were that rare creature in the public sector, an active and committed cigarette-smoker, well-known for lighting up in smoking areas outside community centres across the length and breadth of Yorkshire; and joining the assorted benefit claimants, adult education students, and probation service clients in a congenial fag outside. At the meeting, the researcher had an acute feeling that the Regional Director was actually suppressing their own personal insights.

However, at some stage there needs to be a recognition that at its most useful, research raises challenges and potentially creates debate and conflict. In 1986, just before the researcher started work for Harlow District Council in Essex, the council had undertaken its own qualitative research into views in the local community and amongst young people in the town (Harlow Council, 1986b, 1986a). Reactions were difficult. Many of the District Councillors had moved to Harlow in the years after its foundation in 1947; and genuinely regarded both their lives and their politics as being about the creation of a New Jerusalem by the River Stort.

The revelations that much of what they held dear was not actually valued by many residents, or that for many young people living in Harlow, living there was not actually a special and exciting mission were profoundly unsettling. In the circumstances, the first instinct was to criticise the methodology, and to suggest the conclusions were mere anecdote. However what the researcher observed was that the very fact that the previously unspoken was stated, gradually shifted local discourse and debate in a way which the large biennial omnibus surveys carried out for the Council by MORI did not.

The researcher used research and commissioned research through most of their professional life, and developed a fairly acute sense of its strengths, limitations and uses as both an officer and a politician. In the latter, there were two key questions. The first was understanding the reasons why in the 1987 and 1992 General Elections people weren't voting Labour. The second was why, having developed an understanding of this, comprehending why so much of the Labour Party membership had problems with

grasping what needed to be done, and why after the victories of 1997, 2001 and 2005 there was still a huge reluctance to accept the evidence of why that success had been achieved.

The critical insights into why Labour had failed to win in 1987 and 1992 came, like the contrary views in Harlow discussed above, from qualitative research. Specifically, they came from focus group research commissioned on behalf of the Labour Party, described by Philip Gould in his book 'The Unfinished Revolution' (Gould, 1999). That focus group research was shared widely in the Labour Party, and highlighted voter perceptions - particularly amongst skilled manual workers, and managerial and clerical workers in the private sector - that Labour did not understand them or their concerns. These conclusions were uncomfortable for Labour's activist membership, increasingly concentrated as it was amongst middle-class graduates in public sector occupations (Seyd, 1999; Seyd & Whiteley, 2004). Rather than engage with evidence, the focus of many activists was on undermining the basis of the research. Ten or fifteen people in a room being taken through a structured discussion as part of a focus group were neither representative nor relevant; ten or fifteen self-selecting activists in a branch meeting somehow were.

What was important about the focus group research of Gould and others was its ability to listen to the reflections of people removed from the political process, and to give them voice. Those voices might be uncomfortable and challenging, but listening to them and calibrating message-delivery in response (arguably) gave Labour three election victories in a row. The focus groups also gave early warnings of potential difficulties; and

the researcher remembers one particularly chilling briefing in the early part of the last decade from the Labour Party's Regional Director. For some time it had been clear that the party's performance in Pennine-fringe areas had been problematic. The focus group research laid the problem bare. It was clear that there was a perception amongst white voters in predominantly white areas in Pennine constituencies that Labour was prioritising urban areas with predominantly Muslim populations. Whilst the facts and figures of local authority expenditure said otherwise, the perception had already taken hold. Those insights could only have come from qualitative research, sensitively undertaken.

Experience and knowledge drawn from practice shaped the researcher's view of how research could have practical impact, and reinforced a pre-disposition towards both mixed methods and qualitative research. The experience of doing a dissertation during a Masters degree started to develop and challenge thinking about the research process. The dissertation itself focused on the evaluation of business support programmes in New Deal for Communities areas<sup>19</sup>. It was rooted in the researcher's long-standing concern that business support programmes in general never received the same tight scrutiny or rigorous testing as other policy interventions. In theory, in the New Deal for Communities programme, notionally designed from the bottom up with a Theories of Change Evaluation approach (Center for Theory of Change, 2020), this should have been possible; and the researcher had used them and found them useful in joint working with health sector partners around the Health Action Zone programme and other New Labour

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<sup>19</sup> A programme of concentrated regeneration in 39 partnership areas launched by the Labour Government in 1998, which ran until 2011. Its contribution is discussed by Lupton and others (Lupton, Fenton, & Fitzgerald, 2013). The programme was the subject of the largest evaluation of any regeneration programme in UK history (Batty et al., 2010; Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2020).



health interventions where they were widely used (Blamey & Mackenzie, 2007; Mackenzie, 2005; Mays, Wyke, & Evans, 2001; Stame, 2004).

In practice local New Deal for Communities partnerships were not approaching evaluation with the rigour expected, and the business support interventions were characterised by the same wishful thinking that business support programmes received elsewhere. Four authors shaped the researcher's approach in the research, which was based on three case studies in New Deal for Communities Partnerships; Pawson and Tilley, writing from a realist perspective (Pawson, 2002; Pawson, 2003, 2006; Pawson & Tilley, 1997), Flyvbjerg, using a phronetic approach, with elements of both realism and interpretivism (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 1998, 2001), and the American evaluation scholar Frank Fischer, writing from an interpretivist standpoint (Fischer, 1999, 2003). In many respects their work has significant areas in common. They are accessible, and shaped the researcher's practice as a regeneration professional. They offer approaches which analyse both stated and unstated assumptions, and recognise the importance of the actor accounts in shaping what is recognised as reality. Whilst Pawson and Tilley place more emphasis on the development of a theory, and clearly identifying understandings of context, mechanism and outcome; all offer challenging ways of challenging assumptions in relation to policies, programmes and projects. Interestingly, perhaps reflecting their different epistemological standpoints, none of them reference each other; in spite of their common areas of concern<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>20</sup> After a lecture in Leeds to members of the United Kingdom Evaluation Society in 2008 or 2009, the researcher raised this issue with Ray Pawson, who was unaware of the work of Frank Fischer.

Some further perspectives on the research process came from Lewis Minkin. His work, and its influence on the researcher's intellectual development have been discussed in the previous chapter. In 1997, he published a personal reflection on the process of research 'Exits and Entrances: Political Research as a Creative Art', which the researcher returned to frequently during the research process. Minkin describes himself as:

*'...a methodological pragmatist, flexibly adapting my approach to what worked best in terms of the exigencies and objectives of the fieldwork, but also to what works best in terms of my own mental processes and the efforts to improve them.'*  
(Minkin, 1997: 22)

Minkin also discusses in detail a process of reflection and internal dialogue which are the critical element of his process of analysis; but perhaps his most important insights relate to the methodological pragmatism he describes. Whilst it is important to have research questions and a plan, there is also a need to be flexible. In *The Contentious Alliance*, which deals with the history of the relationship between the Labour Party and the Trade Unions, Minkin highlights the unwritten rules which have governed that relationship through most of the Party's history.

Key periods in which this relationship was shaped were during the debates around the 'In Place of Strife' White Paper in 1969, and over the Social Contract during the 1974-1979 Labour Government; with Hugh Scanlon<sup>21</sup> and Jack Jones<sup>22</sup> the key actors from the trade

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<sup>21</sup> Hugh Scanlon (1913-2004), President of Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers 1968-1978 (now part of Unite).

<sup>22</sup> Jack Jones (1913-2009), General Secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union 1968-1976 (now part of Unite).

union side. An interview with Barbara Castle confirmed that Harold Wilson never said *'get your tanks off my lawn, Hughie'* to Scanlon, but Minkin had never managed to interview Scanlon himself. Whereas Jack Jones was open and approachable, Scanlon was a quiet man who avoided social gatherings. Minkin finally got the opportunity to talk to Scanlon while waiting for a train on Stalybridge Station, and whilst completely unplanned, the discussion shaped Minkin's discussions significantly (Minkin, 1997: 272-290); a lesson in the importance of always being alive to unexpected possibilities in the research process.

Starting the doctoral research process offered opportunities to think about methods and methodologies in more detail. The thinking behind the choice of this research area informed a very thorough focus on the work of Ray Pahl, and also on the subsequent research of Colin Williams, in particular the English Localities Survey carried out between 1998 and 2001, and discussed extensively in subsequent work by Williams (Williams, 2004; Williams, 2005, 2006), the scope and conclusions of which are discussed in the previous chapter. Outwardly the approach is very similar, and Williams frequently acknowledges his debt to Pahl. However, the genesis of the work was very different, reflecting the different contexts within which they were working. Pahl's work was funded by the then-SSRC (Social Science Research Council), and carried out in the era before the 1981 University Grants Committee cuts when university staffing and working arrangements still reflected the climate of post-Robbins expansion. Williams' work, on the other hand, was funded from a number of sources<sup>23</sup>, and carried out largely by

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<sup>23</sup> Including a substantial contribution from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation. In discussions with a number of researchers in other institutions, it has been confirmed that JRF, whilst a prestigious funder, do not operate a funding model which allows institutions to recover full economic costs for research work.

Williams and some academic colleagues, over a period of three years in a number of locations across England.

The depth of Pahl's and Williams's work has yet to be emulated in any other UK research, but the research approach - collecting data from households about their household strategies and how they delivered them, using both qualitative and quantitative approaches - has been used elsewhere, for example by Warde, one of his Sheppey co-researchers (Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993). In particular, the original survey instrument used by Pahl provided a very comprehensive way of understanding the different things which households actually do; and it was used subsequently by Williams in his research.

Part of the problem of this research was trying to emulate as a single, relatively inexperienced researcher, what experienced teams of researchers had achieved previously. Only one other doctoral student of whom the researcher is aware has undertaken research of this type in a UK context; White, in a thesis of 2006 (R. J. White, 2006). Early in the research process White's thesis was reviewed, and the researcher met White to discuss his research. In that discussion the key difficulty White identified with the mixed-methods approach he adopted - an interview combining quantitative and qualitative questions - was the difficulty presented by the relatively small sample size that he used (n=100); where the validity of those findings was challenged by his examiners.

As the researcher planned their fieldwork and analysis, three factors became clear. First, the process of reviewing literature led to a greater interest in *why* household strategies were adopted and how those strategies worked, and less focus on questions of the degree or extent to which different strategies were used. Those authors such as Hobbs (Hobbs, 1989), White (White, 1979), Leonard (Leonard, 1994, 2000), MacDonald (MacDonald, 1994), and McElwee and Smith (Smith & McElwee, 2011, 2013) who had adopted primarily qualitative methods had illuminated these questions, and much of the strength of Pahl's work lay in its qualitative insights. This pointed towards an approach which was much more qualitative. The second factor was a recognition, with the experience of White and others in mind, that achieving the necessary sample sizes for quantitative research based on questionnaires presented a significant challenge. Finally, it was recognised that the logistical challenge of balancing fieldwork with the part-time work necessary as an unfunded doctoral student meant that compromises needed to be made, and the initial ambition to replicate the Pahl/Williams approach was abandoned. Instead, it was decided to concentrate on a qualitative study. Whilst this was partly driven by practical considerations, the decision reflected an increasing recognition that what needed to be understood could best be addressed through qualitative research.

### **3.3 The Case Study Approach**

The research questions which arose from the literature review required an approach to methodology and methods which could obtain rich data to provide a detailed description of the households being studied, the strategies they adopted, and what those strategies

achieved. This information came in a variety of forms, including numerical and temporal data on services obtained in various ways, as well as qualitative data on why particular strategies and approaches were adopted, and the degree to which these choices were the product of structure and agency. This needed to be supported by a range of contextual information, whether relating to over-arching issues such as local socio-economic indicators; or more detailed data on local tenancy policies (which can limit economic activities in the home), planning policies (which can also restrict economic activities in residential areas, and have a significant effect on residential patterns and social balance) or bus timetables (with their implications for access to services).

In this context Yin suggests the case study as a preferred method when 'how' or 'why' questions are being explored; when the investigator has limited control over events, or when the focus is on a real-life, contemporary phenomena (Yin, 2014). Case studies also have the potential to retain a more holistic picture of issues, which is important given the need to understand context as a key aspect of this study's aims.

Flyvbjerg suggests that a discipline without case studies is a discipline without exemplars (Flyvbjerg, 2006). He also considers that case studies challenge researchers:

*'According to Campbell.....and others, researchers who have conducted intensive, in-depth case studies typically report that their pre-conceived views, assumptions, concepts and hypotheses were wrong and that the case material has forced them to revise their hypotheses on essential points. This is my own experience as well' (Flyvbjerg, 2006: P19).*

This was also the experience of the researcher in this case. The research process forced the re-evaluation of a number of the premises of the research, relating to both the prevalence of informal economic activity in the community in question, as well as raising questions about the way that communities and networks operated for the respondents in the research.

The case study *research approach* offers the means to marshal different sources of information, and manage qualitative, numerical and temporal data. This is the case study, and the term *research approach* is used advisedly. In terms of methodological scholarship, whilst there is recognition across disciplines of the value of case studies (Darke, Shanks, & Broadbent, 1998; Eisenhardt, 1989; B. Flyvbjerg, 2006; Gerring, 2004; Peattie, 2001; Seawright & Gerring, 2008; Yin, 1981, 2012, 2014), there is no clear agreement on whether the case study is a methodology, a method or something else. Yin, one of the most prolific authors on the case study approach, argues that the case study is neither a method or methodology, but a research strategy, advancing the view that (Yin, 1981, P59):

*'What the case study does represent is a research strategy, to be likened to an experiment, a history, or a simulation, which may be considered alternative research strategies.'*

and that

*'As a research strategy, the distinguishing characteristic of the case study is that it attempts to examine: (a) a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when (b) the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.'* (Researchers emphasis)

Van Wysperghe and Khan develop this discussion, but in opposition to Yin, suggest that the case study needs to be considered *sui generis*, and is (Van Wynsberghe & Khan, 2007):

*'a transparadigmatic and transdisciplinary heuristic that involves the careful delineation of the phenomena for which evidence is being collected (event, concept, program, process, etc.)'* p84

in which a heuristic is

*'an approach that focuses one's attention during learning, construction, discovery, or problem solving'* p81

They suggest that case studies have a number of key features. The first is that they deal with a small-N sample. From the point of view of the current study this is important. Only one of the studies discussed in Appendix 2 (which summarises field research on household strategies in the UK since Pahl's work in the late seventies) was undertaken as part of a Ph.D., and most were completed by teams of full-time researchers. In the case of Pahl's work on Sheppey the quantitative phase was supported by specialist market-



research interviewers from SCPR (now NatCen). This study was undertaken by one Doctoral researcher, combining study with part-time work. In addition, the study was primarily focussed on qualitative considerations. Given this, an academic approach recognised by a wide range of authors as delivering meaningful data (Bennett, 2004; Bennett & Elman, 2006; Darke et al., 1998; Gerring, 2004; Verschuren, 2003), based on relatively limited numbers, has validity and is defensible.

Second, Van Wynsberghe and Khan suggest that case studies incorporate a detailed account of context, a view shared by a range of other authors writing about methodology (Bryman, 2004, p49; Eisenhardt, 1989; Flyvbjerg, 2006; Flyvbjerg, 2001; Peattie, 2001; Robson, 2011, p135-142). In this study, this approach, in which the households were studied within a particular social and economic context, was especially important. Third, a case study necessarily takes place in natural settings, and is not based on experiments or simulations. Fourth, it has a bounded focus, whether in terms of geography, social circumstance or time.

Van Wysperghe and Khan also highlighted a fifth feature, the case study's power to develop working hypotheses and build theory, a view shared by other authors (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 1995; Yin, 1981, 2012, 2014). Although some critics of case studies, as highlighted by Flyvbjerg and Yin, raise the potential for researcher bias, a range of authors claim the opposite is the case. As Eisenhardt (Eisenhardt, 1989, p546) suggested:

*'...a myth surrounding theory building from case studies is that the process is limited by investigators' preconceptions, in fact, just the opposite is true. This constant juxtaposition of conflicting realities tends to "unfreeze" thinking, and so the process has the potential to generate theory with less researcher bias than theory built from incremental studies or armchair, axiomatic deduction.'*

The literature review highlighted that there has been little research into the informal economy in deprived communities in the UK in the last decades, and a lack of theoretical analysis that helps explain current circumstances. The deep and immersive approach embodied in the case study offers the scope for further theory-building (Stake, 1995), especially given the sixth feature identified by Van Wysperghe and Khan, the case study's use of multiple data sources. Whilst the current study is necessarily limited in scope, the final axiomatic feature of the case study, its extendability, implies the development of an approach testable elsewhere. As Eisenhardt suggests, the underlying logic of the case study is one of replication; of treating a series of separate units of analysis within the case study as a series of experiments, each either confirming or contradicting emergent hypotheses (Eisenhardt, 1989).

These factors raise important questions for research design, and planning the research process, with an emphasis on thorough preparation (Darke et al., 1998). In addition, data collection needs to be thorough and exhaustive, and if anything, researchers need to over-report (Gerring, 2004). Comprehensive field notes need to be maintained, with Eisenhardt emphasising the need to write down whatever impressions occur (Eisenhardt,

1989), rather than selecting only what seems important, and Yin highlighting the difference between note-taking and narrative writing (Yin, 2014).

### 3.4 The Case Study Area

The research was based on a single case study, in a single village. Originally it was intended to carry out interviews and other fieldwork in two villages, approximately four miles apart. During the research process, because of pressure of time and the difficulty in recruiting further respondents, it was decided to concentrate research in one village only. The village chosen was one where the researcher had undertaken regeneration projects in their previous career. From the point of view of the research, the village had advantages of compactness, and relative accessibility from the researcher's home, and was in many ways an archetype of Yorkshire mining villages. In order to preserve the identity of the village, and to protect the anonymity of the respondents, it has been re-named Ballyhenry for the purposes of the research<sup>24</sup>.

It is a relatively small pit-village, which was an agricultural hamlet before the onset of deep mining in this part of Yorkshire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century. The village is an archetypal mining village, with a combination of 19<sup>th</sup> Century terraced housing, public-sector estates constructed between the wars and a range of subsequent speculative private-sector building. As a village, it is relatively self-contained, with a range of housing (pre-1919, inter-war and post-war public-sector estates, and recent private-sector new-build). It is now a rural settlement of 3000-4000 adults, coming to terms with

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<sup>24</sup> An Ulster townland, near the town of Comber, in Co. Down (Cooper, 2015)

a changing role in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, but retaining its main characteristics. This represents a case study area which was physically feasible for one researcher to investigate, especially given the researcher's familiarity with the village.

The village's population is relatively stable, with migration confined largely to a number of new speculative private sector housing developments built from the mid-1990's. Whilst not a central concern of the research, or a focus of any of the research questions, the fact that coalfield local authorities such as Wakefield (and also neighbouring Doncaster and Barnsley) saw new housing development and housing market restructuring as a policy tool for maintaining the viability of coalfield villages represents important wider context, as well as an opportunity to investigate how in-comers integrate into existing community networks.

The village lies north of Wakefield's border with the Barnsley Metropolitan Borough. As a village it did not relate to a single mine. Local men worked at a number of pits, notably Nostell in the Wakefield District and Grimethorpe, in Barnsley. Employment in mining has been replaced locally by logistics, and the study offered the opportunity to look at communities where the dominant local industry, logistics, has been affected by the arrival of migrant labour from the A8 countries in the post-2003 period.

By 2005 Wakefield had proportionally the largest concentration of logistics employment in any UK local authority (Taylor, 2005), and the sector continues to be critically important for the district (Kumi-Ampofo, Bowes, Woolley, & McTigue, 2014). In this context it is worth noting that average numbers of A8 migrants in the village hover

around the 1-2% level, and anecdotal evidence suggests that they are concentrated in private-rented accommodation in the larger villages in the locality<sup>25</sup>.

The relative isolation of the village offered the opportunity to ask further questions relating to household strategies. The village only had small convenience retailers. The nearest supermarkets are a number of miles away. Face-to-face access to services such as utilities or financial services was difficult. The study needed to look at how households accessed them, including the impact on non-car owners. The study also addressed how households accessed the internet for remote working, shopping and other key public and private services. This allowed an examination of significant changes in the challenges facing households in recent decades, and the nature of market and non-market provision of goods and services.

The village is classified by ONS as deprived, with all the local SOA's listed in the 20% most deprived in the UK, although none are in the lowest 10%. This bears out the assessment by Foden, Fothergill and Gore (Foden, Fothergill, & Gore, 2014, P26), that

*'The coalfields generally lack the acute segregation between rich and poor areas that often develops within cities, so coalfield neighbourhoods tend not to be among the very most deprived.'*

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<sup>25</sup> Based on analysis of 2011 Census, and discussions with former colleagues involved in work with private-sector landlords in the area.

In this context it could clearly be argued that the community presented as an archetypal deprived ex-mining community archetype in the Yorkshire context<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> As defined, for example in the EU's RECHAR programmes targeting former coalfield communities, or the Coal Task Force report.

## **3.4 The Research Process**

This section sets out the key aspects of the research process, including desk and stakeholder research, publicity and participant recruitment. The details of the qualitative interview process are outlined, and interview schedule design is discussed. How the data will be analysed is set out, including a discussion of analytical frameworks.

### **3.4.1 Preliminary Research**

Preliminary documentary research, statistical analysis and intelligence gathering in the locality, and with local agencies was undertaken. This included analysis of income levels, benefit dependency and poverty locally; as well as associated issues such as demographic structure, qualification levels, car ownership and employment figures. Most of this information is available from the 2011 Census. Some other issues, such as the past prevalence of mining employment, local accessibility and transport, and information on population shifts and movement relied on other data from the local authority and health agencies.

### 3.4.2 Stakeholder Research and Interviews

Undertaking interviews with stakeholders had three key purposes.

- Gaining intelligence on local issues which might have relevance for the study, such as the prevalence of 'working whilst claiming' as a justification in benefit sanctions and fraud prosecutions locally; the operation of the new Enterprise Allowance in the wider area; perceptions of the informal economy locally; the operation of the local housing market, and the effects of introducing choice-based lettings by WDH (Wakefield District Housing) and other local Registered Social Landlords (RSL's). The research also gleaned information on the impact of austerity on local programmes and facilities, specifically on Adult Education and the loss of Surestart funding for the local Surestart Centre.
- Introducing the researcher. The communities involved are close-knit, and the researcher is known from past work to some local decision-makers and community activists. There are pitfalls in using (and privileging) local gate-keepers to help with access to respondents, which needs to be avoided, but good manners, respectful behaviour and appropriate explanations of what 'outsiders' are doing in the community helps to prevent misunderstandings and promote co-operation.
- Making specific contact with WDH, key Council staff, and District and Parish Councillors to ensure they were aware of the specific periods the researcher would be present in the area. This was achieved through an interview with two



District Councillors, one of whom was also a Parish Councillor, as well as discussions with key WDH and Council staff at a local community forum early in the research process.

An interview was also sought with the local Member of Parliament or their office specifically to seek information of the impact of welfare and care-related issues on constituency case-work, but it did not prove possible to make arrangements for this. Whilst some researchers have adopted an approach of much more significant engagement with institutional stakeholders, the relatively limited engagement of these stakeholders allowed a clearer focus on the respondents' stories considered in their own terms.

### **3.4.3 Qualitative Interviews**

A number of other options were considered before deciding to undertake household interviews - use of an internet survey, telephone surveys and postal surveys. Having reviewed relevant literature on the subject (Bryman, 2004; Legard, Keegan, & Ward, 2003; Robson, 2011), the approach adopted - completion of the interviews on a face-to-face basis, was chosen for the following reasons:

- The potentially sensitive nature of the issues being investigated, and the need to assure respondents of the confidential nature of the process. Previous research in the field has generally used face-to-face surveys and interviews successfully.
- The length of the interview schedule, which requires at least 60 minutes to complete, and which if, administered as a postal or self-completion survey requires both patience and literacy skills which cannot be assumed in the population to be surveyed.
- The risk of bias, with people who have either more time, the ability to complete a questionnaire more quickly, or both, more likely to respond. This problem would be magnified with the use of an internet surveys, where certain groups of respondents are less likely to have internet access.
- The risk of non-completion, or inaccurate answers, where respondents start to lose interest in the survey.

A thorough and pragmatic approach was adopted when recruiting potential respondents for the research. This recognised that whilst the research approach did not require a representative sample, to gain the most useful perspective on the range of household work strategies across the area a diverse set of participants by household type, age and tenure needed to be recruited. A conscious decision was made to avoid an approach that risked recruiting participants from the same groups and social networks, through snowballing for example, and although leaflets and posters were left in local community centres and clinics the researcher chose to focus on direct recruitment of participants through introductory cards, followed by letters to individuals.

- *First*, the village was leafleted with an introductory card (reproduced at Appendix 4). This card explained the research in accessible terms. Using the researcher's experience of organising political campaigns, the focus was on a card which could be read and absorbed in less than a minute by someone with the reading skills required for a tabloid newspaper. The topic was explained, ethical safeguards were clarified and the incentive payment was stated; and people interested in the topic were invited to make contact with the researcher by e-mail, telephone or letter. Whilst it was hoped this would generate some individual leads (and it did); the primary aim was to build awareness, and to create a device to open conversations with local residents.
- *Second*, a list of 100 residents in the village was generated at random from the electoral register, and the researcher sent personal letters to the first twenty initially, inviting them to take part (reproduced at Appendix 4). The idea here was not to generate a representative sample, but to allow a structured approach to accessing households in different parts of the village. There are some problems with the use of electoral registers - including accuracy in areas where there is high population turnover and recent reports have highlighted the disappearance of large numbers of people from the electoral roll with the switch to individual registration (Gani, 2015; Wheeler, 2015). However, with a stable local population and an electoral registration function regarded as efficient, this was less of a risk<sup>27</sup>. Although obtaining copies of the electoral register took time (two months

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<sup>27</sup> This proved to be the case for Ballyhenry, with no letters to individuals on the electoral register returned by the Post Office as misaddressed.

to get approval from the local authority), and incurred a cost, pursuing this option allowed personalised letters to named individuals within households.

The introductory letter provided full details of the research, balancing the need for an explanation in plain English, with Sheffield University's ethical and legal requirements. Respondents were offered a £10 Shopping Voucher in recognition of their time commitment to the research. Incentives of this nature are used widely in social research<sup>28</sup>, and a wide range of authors have highlighted both the time pressures on respondents (Reay, 1995; Seymour, 1992), and concluded that they are an ethical and appropriate approach to maximise participation in social research (Draper, Wilson, Flanagan, & Ives, 2009; Edwards et al., 2002; Fry & Dwyer, 2001; McKeganey, 2001; Russell, Moralejo, Burgess, & Russell, 2000; Simmons & Wilmot, 2004; Singer & Ye, 2012; Wilmot, 2005).

Even with the incentive there was a poor response rate initially, although additional approaches to recruitment were tried, including cards and posters in local community centres and health facilities. Where there was no response, either by post, e-mail or telephone, residents were door-knocked as well. As responses were initially poor, further local residents from the lists of 100 residents in the village were selected and contacted, initially by letter.

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<sup>28</sup> Examples of which the author is aware include work undertaken for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation's Poverty and Place Study by the Centre for Regional and Economic and Social Research at Sheffield Hallam, and current ESRC-funded research on welfare conditionality being undertaken by a consortium of institutions including Sheffield University.

Interviews were carried out between December 2016 and April 2017, and where possible were combined with other activities such as further card and letter deliveries. During the process, field-notes were kept. These allowed the researcher to record impressions, as well as additional details relating to interviews. In addition, the researcher took large numbers of photographs. Because of the requirements of anonymisation, these have not been included in the thesis document, but effectively record the research process, as well as shaping the researcher's process of reflection on the evidence which came from the interviews. Seventeen interviews were carried out and details of the respondents are summarised at Appendix 1. Fieldwork was carried out from December 2016, through to the decision to cease fieldwork in May 2017.

The varieties of household amongst those interviewed was continually reviewed during fieldwork. It was envisaged that some groups would be more difficult to contact - those out at work, in particular commuters; residents of new estates; men; and younger people. The opposite was the case. The group which was least likely to respond were long-term local residents, and those at home during the day.

At an early stage in planning the research it had been decided to recruit participants directly, and not through gatekeepers such as community activists and community groups, as this risked skewing the study towards particular groups. Attempts to recruit participants through local groups proved unsuccessful. Considered in retrospect these approaches could have been re-evaluated. This has to be balanced against the substantial time-commitment that the fieldwork had already taken; and the success in

recruiting respondents who did not conform to stereotypes of mining community resident, specifically incomers.

Interviews failed to reveal any individual working in the informal economy. Because of this, specific efforts were made to recruit additional respondents with the appropriate characteristics - through conversations with builders working locally, sending letters to houses with vans or other commercial vehicles outside, and informal approaches through other interviewees, but none were successful. One approach which was initially planned was making contact with the local amateur Rugby League club, but again this was not pursued because of time pressures. From the researcher's experience as an ex-amateur Rugby League player, this avenue would have had the potential to gain male respondents in skilled and semi-skilled manual work.

Interviews and fieldwork were undertaken during evenings and at weekends, as well as during weekdays. All but one of the interviews took place in respondents' homes. The option of being interviewed in a community building such as a library or community centre was offered, which one respondent took up. All interviews were recorded for later transcription by the researcher and a paid transcription service. Limited additional notes were also taken during interviews to record key issues or impressions.

The qualitative interviews used in the study built substantially on previous survey instruments used by other researchers, primarily as a quantitative survey (Living and Working on Sheppey, 2018; Pahl, 1984; R. J. White, 2006; C. C. Williams, 2002, 2004; Colin Williams, 2004). The interview schedule itself was in two parts. The first was a

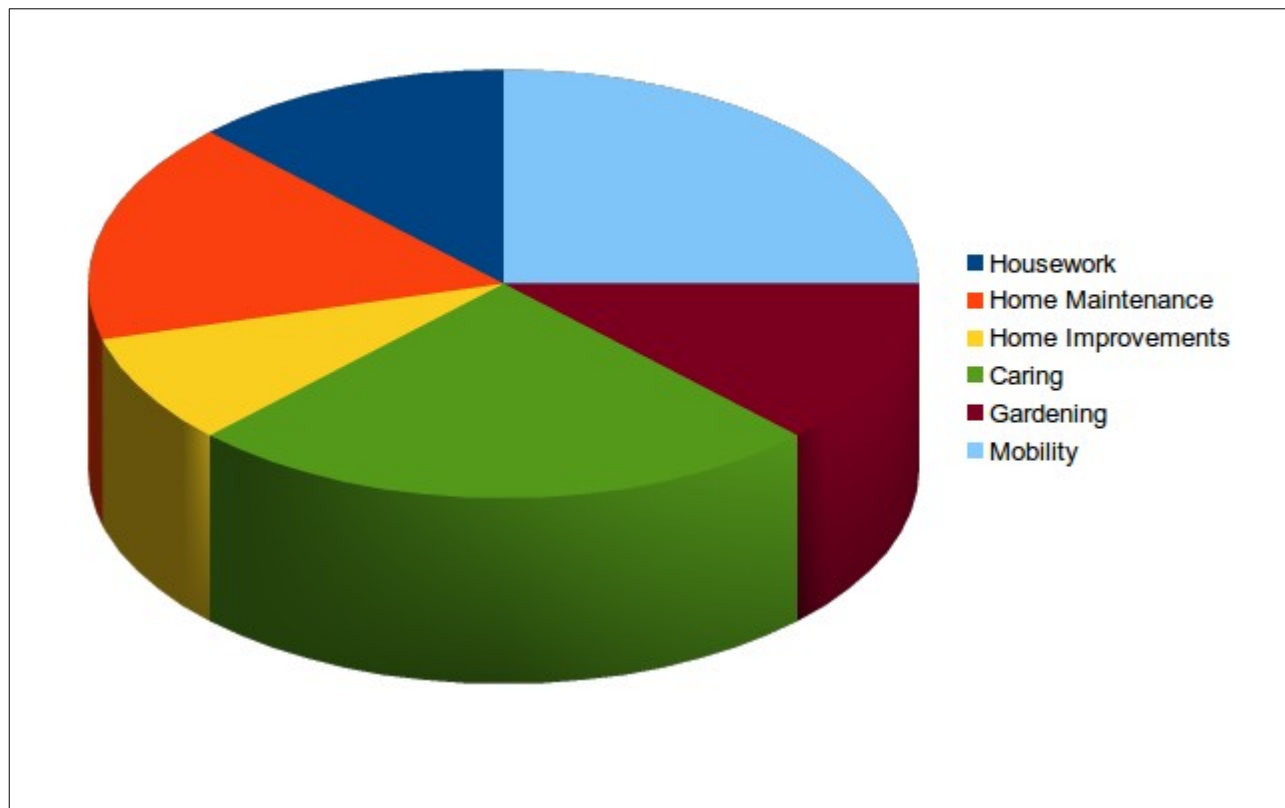
section relating to individual and household attributes, covering household composition and demographic information, as well as details of housing, employment and household income. In addition, further questions asked for information on where household members worked, and the location of other family members. This was intended to help understand the nature of the networks of family and friends that households either helped or received help from, and the impact of any commuting on household work strategies.

The second part of the interview schedule asked respondents a detailed series of questions regarding how their households did a range of household tasks. In developing this part of the schedule the key consideration was balancing the requirement for a holistic picture of the range of activities undertaken by households with the need for a manageable interview. The key categories covered housework and related activities, home maintenance, home improvements, care, gardening, and travel and mobility.

### **3.4.3 Interview Content**

The relative weight of the key elements in household work strategies where households **have a degree of choice** over how they meet needs, are summarised in the diagram at Figure 3.1. Some areas encompass a potentially wide range of activities, such as care, which where it is needed is essential to households. Others, such as home improvements, are less immediately critical.

**Figure 3.1 Meeting Household Needs: The Potential Elements of a Household Work Strategy**



The key areas of focus in terms of research was those areas of discretionary activity, where households choose, or are forced by necessity, to secure services through the market, voluntary provision, self-provisioning, mutual exchange or cash-in-hand transactions. What they had in common was that whether and how these tasks are accomplished depends on a range of factors - geographical, social etc. - which in many cases are specific to a household.

Discretionary activity is the focus for a number of reasons

- the fruitlessness of looking at other key areas of household needs and household expenditure - utilities such as water and power are almost exclusively secured



through market transactions, as is housing, and whilst there are fond hopes for non-market and non-statutory channels of provision, the impact of schemes such as time banks and LETS (Local Exchange and Trading Schemes) has been limited (Cooper, 2013).

- the importance of family and friends in helping meet these needs, an issue which policy, for example on welfare conditionality, often fails to take into account.

The discretionary activities which were investigated include

- Housework and related activities - general housework; ironing, an activity usually undertaken as part of general housework, but sometimes procured from ironing services; and household administration including arranging childcare, managing finance and online banking. As previously discussed, the literature highlights these as areas where gender responsibilities are problematic for many households, and which devolve overwhelmingly to women (Evertsson & Neramo, 2007; Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010; Oakley, 1985; Speakman & Marchington, 1999). Other authors have also highlighted the impact for women of undertaking these tasks for elderly or disabled relatives or neighbours (Boyce, 2006; Gosling, 2008; Parry, 2003; C. C. Williams, 2008b).
- Home maintenance - routine tasks, including assembling domestic items such as flat-pack furniture or curtains; minor maintenance tasks including small-scale plastering, plumbing or painting; maintaining appliances such as cookers or

boilers; electrical repairs; and fixing computers and internet connections. These are generally critical for people to live comfortably safely and securely in their homes. Not being able to get them done can have a significant impact. For example, access to the internet is an effective requirement of the DWP conditionality regime. All five areas have also been highlighted as key 'ways in' to cash-in-hand work, or trading in paid favours (Katungi, Neale, & Barbour, 2006; Ojo, Nwankwo, & Gbadamosi, 2013; Williams, 2008a, 2008b; Williams, Nadin, Rodgers, & Round, 2011).

- Home improvements - more substantial building work, including internal work such as installing kitchens, bathrooms, or central heating; and external work such as constructing domestic extensions, garages and conservatories. Such work requires tools, skills and working capital. It is also an area in which divisions between work in the formal economy and cash-in-hand work are often blurred (Katungi et al., 2006; Travers, 2001; Williams, 2008a; Williams & Windebank, 2005). Some small builders take payment partly in cash and partly by cheque, other skilled trades-people work off-the-books for family, friends and personal contacts, and some use cash-in-hand work as part of the test-trading process before moving into full self-employment. Questions were included within the interview schedule to help identify the pattern of this activity, if any, within the study area.
- Care - the academic literature highlights the importance and impact of caring as a key issue for households, although this has not been discussed at length in the

published literature on informal working or household work strategies from Pahl onwards. The research investigated giving and receiving childcare, care for the elderly and support for people with disabilities. The latter two are a particular issue in an area like south-east Wakefield with high levels of disability, long-term illness, and a relatively older age profile. The critical nature of informal care for children by family members in the wider locality is borne out by the researcher's professional experience, allied to a cultural reluctance to use paid-for childcare, as highlighted by Innes and Scott in their Glasgow study (Innes & Scott, 2003). These issues are often the first consideration for many people when they think about getting or changing jobs, pursuing training, or moving house, even within a locality.

- Gardening - residents were asked about general domestic gardening, vegetable-growing and lawn-mowing are included for three reasons. First, inter-war semi-detached homes with large gardens are a prevailing house type in the area, as in many other mining communities. For residents, this was both a bane and benefit. Second, like many mining areas, the culture of allotment gardening discussed by Williamson and other authors remains important (Dennis, Henriques, & Slaughter, 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992; Williamson, 1982). Third, garden maintenance and lawn-mowing are fields where mutual aid and the exchange of favours happen, and which can be an entry-point into cash-in-hand working.
- Travel and mobility - as discussed previously, the survey location is relatively isolated, and many local residents have mobility difficulties. Major employers

were generally at least an hour's journey by public transport, as are the local hospitals. Access to cars and/or lifts was therefore important, and the research asked about getting to work, going shopping, taking children to school and going to hospital. In addition, respondents were asked about how they got cars repaired and maintained, as this is both a critical service, as well as a way-in to informal work for those with skills and experience in the area.

### **3.5 Analysing the Data**

The interview scripts provided both quantitative and qualitative data. The research timetable allowed for some coding and transcription of interview scripts during the fieldwork process. Before coding and transcription, completed interview scripts and transcripts were numbered, and pseudonyms assigned to participants and any other individuals they discussed during the interviews.

Whilst the intention of the research was not to undertake detailed statistical analyses, and statistical inferences cannot be drawn from a sample of this size, the numerical and geographical nature of some of the data that was gathered allowed for some quantitative analysis to take place. For example, respondents were asked where they live, where they work, and where there were family or friends who could help them with tasks, and in turn where those they helped lived. This allowed plotting of support networks, and where similarities between respondents were identified, allowing the development of typologies, in particular, where the size and nature of networks was

associated with other characteristics, such as the length of time respondents had lived in the area.

Similar analysis was undertaken with data relating to the tasks households undertook, allowing the development of household typologies defined by the nature and extent of the tasks which was undertaken for themselves or others, or the extent to which they relied on family or friends to get work done. This analytical work was undertaken physically, as a paper-based exercise. In undertaking this analysis, comparisons were made with other research, notably Pahl's original Sheppey study and subsequent work by Warde, Williams, and White.

After this initial work, the next stage of data analysis was the creation of short vignettes for each household, describing the nature of the household work strategy for each household. A similar exercise was undertaken for the six key areas of discretionary activity, across the case study area, identifying if common characteristics between respondents might enable the creation of typologies.

At this stage of the research it was also important to be aware of any identifying characteristics or activities which, if published could threaten the anonymity of participants. Data which was sensitive, or which clearly identifies individuals or households was dealt with in a manner which is consistent with Sheffield University's published policies.

Qualitative elements of scripts were read initially in-depth, followed by coding using the general inductive approach (Thomas, 2003, 2006), where upper-level categories are derived from the research questions, but lower-level categories are derived from multiple readings of the interview scripts. Importantly, coding and analysis started as the research was undertaken, with initial post-interview notes made in the research diary, and initial coding immediately after transcription. The use of a software package, such as Nvivo or Dedoose, a web-based solution to manage qualitative data, was considered to assist with this process and the subsequent analysis of interview scripts. Nvivo was rejected because it lacks a native Linux client<sup>29</sup>, and web-based solutions raise data security issues. In the end, given the number of respondents, much of the analysis was undertaken through a simple, paper-based approach.

### 3.6 Analytical Frameworks

Given the nature of the case study approach, and its potential to support the iterative development of theory, the study did not present a comprehensive set of analytical frameworks at the beginning of the process. Analysis of any case occurs at a number of levels, and in different ways, and at different times in the research process. As Stake states:

*'There is no particular moment when data analysis begins. Analysis is a matter of giving meaning to first impressions as well as to final compilations. Analysis*

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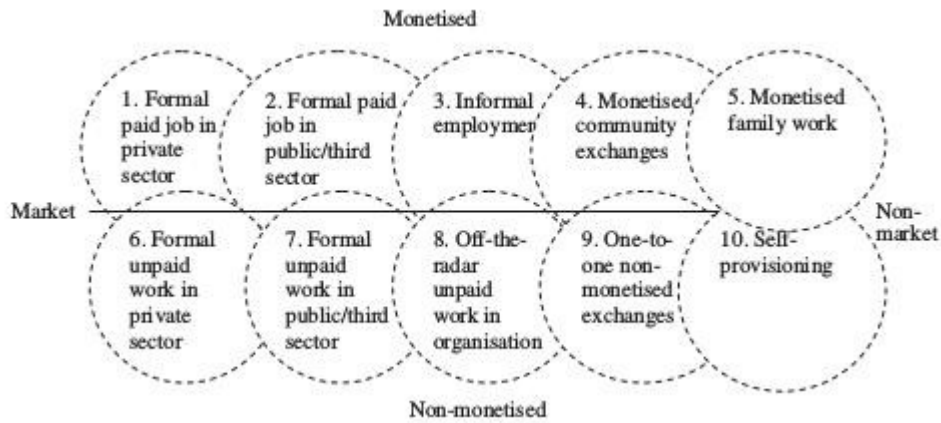
<sup>29</sup> The researcher works in the Linux environment, and uses only Open Source software for reasons of morality and convenience.

*essentially means taking something apart. We take our impressions, our observations, apart' (Stake, 1995, P 71).*

Nevertheless, published work, in particular Glucksmann's Total Social Organisation of Labour framework (Glucksmann, 2006, 2009), and conceptual thinking by Williams, and Williams and Nadin offered some potential ways in which household work strategies might be codified and analysed (Williams, 2011; Williams & Nadin, 2010).

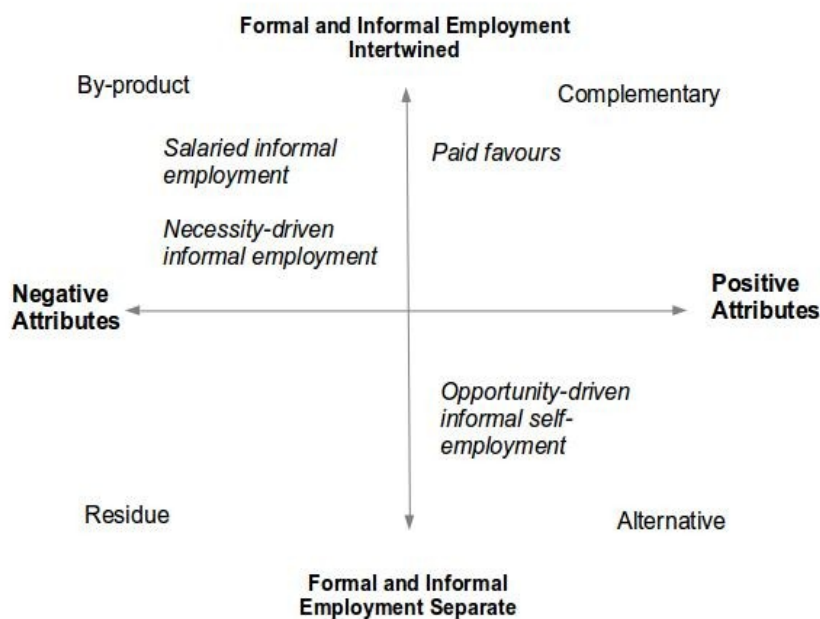
Williams and Nadin identify the range of work practices, ranging from formal paid employment in the private sector to self-provisioning (Williams & Nadin, 2010). The diagram at Figure 3.2 illustrates this. For individuals this may vary over time - someone with a paid role in a company may also grow produce for themselves and others on an allotment; or an individual working in construction may undertake cash-in-hand work at the weekends for friends and acquaintances.

**Figure 3.2 A Taxonomy of Practices in the Whole Economy (Williams & Nadin, 2010)**



The second question is what motivates (or forces) individuals to work informally, and a further framework developed by Williams is shown at Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.3 The Relationships Between Formal and Informal Employment (Williams, 2011)**

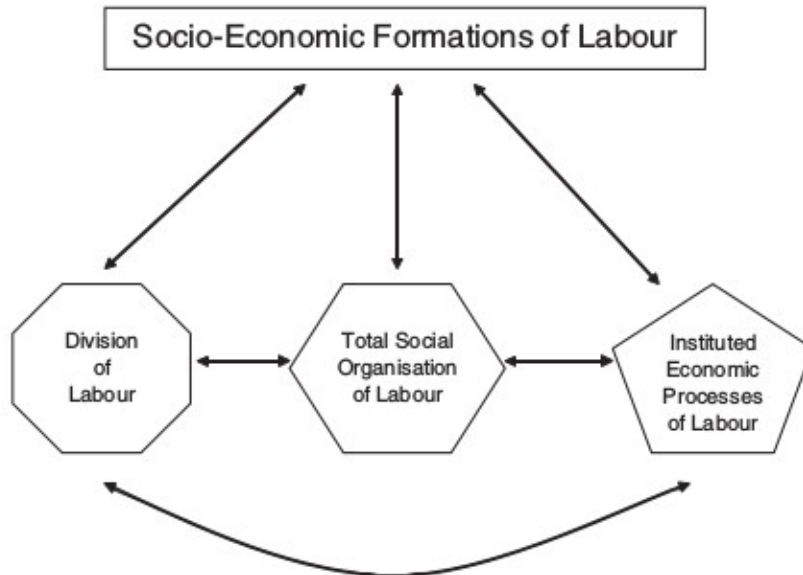




Williams suggests, based on the results of the English Localities Survey (1998 - 2001), that in affluent areas, the bulk of work undertaken informally sits on the right hand side of the diagram, with work either undertaken using existing skills for friends, neighbours and other contacts, or opportunity-driven self-employment, for example complementary therapists working for relatively affluent individuals. Fifteen years after the original fieldwork, some of the judgements may need to be revisited in the light of economic changes. For example, from 2003 anyone working in a security related role has required an Security Industry Authority card, and from the mid-1990's the construction industry has increasingly required workers to hold a Construction Skills Certification Scheme card. These developments make cash-in-hand working in these areas harder, especially when combined with the growth of facilities management contractors in fields such as cleaning and caretaking. Nevertheless, Williams's framework remains a potentially valuable tool.

The changes in the labour market which have been outlined previously make an examination of work in its wider context necessarily. In this, the work of Glucksmann, developing what she describes as the 'Socio-Economic Formations of Labour' framework or approach, has explanatory and analytical value (see Figure 3.4). She sees socio-economic formations of labour as constantly shifting, and shaped by the interplay between three different ways of differentiating and integrating labour processes.

**Figure 3.4 Socio-Economic Formations of Labour (Glucksmann, 2009)**



The first is the classic, technical division of labour to achieve different tasks. An example could be the work of plumbers, electricians, joiners and tilers to fit a kitchen or a bathroom. Even where the person doing all the jobs may be the same, the tasks are technically different, requiring different skills, and in Fordist models of production the tasks may be extremely specialised and discrete.

The second is the organisation of an activity across different socio-economic modes. For example, in Wakefield into the 1990's, the local authority was a dominant provider of care to the elderly, both in the community through a home-help service, or in sheltered accommodation or residential homes. This has changed over the past two decades to a pattern based on less residential provision and homecare delivered through a range of

providers, whilst at the same time assessment criteria have been tightened and more responsibility devolves to family members.

The final way in which Glucksmann views labour processes is through the prism of what she describes as instituted labour processes. These considering how labour is organised across the realms of production, distribution, exchange and consumption, with Glucksmann highlighting the increasing importance of the 'consumption work' which has been discussed earlier. Examples could include the totality of processes by which a ready-meal reaches the consumers table, involving work at many stages including, potentially, the consumer's work in navigating a supermarket website to make the menu choice. Glucksmann is clear that her frameworks are (Glucksmann, 2009, P 892):

*'preliminary and require considerable development.'*

but nevertheless offered a means of analysing and understanding data in the research.

### **3.7 Ethics and Reflexivity**

The series of studies of Yorkshire mining communities which are an important element of the previous chapter also contain a cautionary tale for researchers. As part of their research, Warwick and Littlejohn revisited Featherstone (*Ashton*), where Dennis, Henriques and Slaughter had done their fieldwork almost thirty years earlier (Dennis et al., 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992). In the course of this, they talked to people who had been interviewed as part of the original study.

Whilst some people felt that *'Coal is Our Life'* was an accurate portrayal of Featherstone in the period, significant numbers did not. Warwick and Littlejohn also asked respondents in other mining communities whether they were aware of the book, and report that this was widespread. This researcher concurs. Most of the Labour Party, NUM and community activists that they know have either read the book or are aware of it. It is still discussed in West Yorkshire's former mining communities today, more than sixty years after its first publication.

The criticisms made of the book locally therefore repay consideration. *'They spent a lot of time in the pubs and clubs,'* was a repeated comment. Another interviewee reported that one elderly miner kept up an endless stream of anecdotes for the researchers as long as the beer flowed. Warwick and Littlejohn also quote at length from an interview with a trade unionist and local Labour councillor who felt both that the book gave a distorted picture of the town, and that the researchers had engaged in deception and misrepresentation to gain people's confidence. He and many other people had:

*'...been outraged and deeply hurt when the book was published. They had believed the researchers were devoted supporters of the Labour Party...<sup>30</sup>They had been made honorary members of Green Lane Club in which they had spent a great deal of time...The place was represented as a cultural desert, full of drunken, wife-*

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<sup>30</sup> Dennis was a Labour Party member, and a Councillor in Sunderland during the 1960's. Henriques' politics are unclear, and at the time of the research Slaughter was a member of the Communist Party. He left in 1956, and joined the succession of Trotskyite groups led by Gerry Healy, breaking with Healy in 1985 over his sexual abuse of female party members.

*beating miners who only thought of beer, baccy and betting, Rugby League football and girls of low morals.’ (Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992: 32)*

Slaughter and his collaborators’ choice to anonymise Featherstone as ‘Ashton’, yet to publish so much detail which clearly identifies the town is both difficult to comprehend, and an ethical failure. The town was identified on 10 February 1956 by the Yorkshire Post, shortly after the book’s publication (Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992: 32). Whilst much of that local detail is most apparent to West and South Yorkshire residents, discussion of the local Rugby League team’s appearance at the Challenge Cup Final at Wembley is one of many items which makes the deduction painfully simple.

Featherstone Rovers are, of course, the only team from a Yorkshire mining town to appear at Wembley between 1950 and 1956. The other Yorkshire coalfield clubs - Wakefield, Castleford and Doncaster - did not. Slaughter and his colleagues used local political networks to gain access to Featherstone, wrote an account where significant numbers of local people felt their community was misrepresented, and clearly identified that community. Many of those interviewed obviously felt the principle of doing no harm was violated. As Warwick and Littlejohn point out, the experience must stand:

*‘as a significant warning to anyone who tries to comment without first reaching some agreement with the subjects of the research as to the appropriate framework of analysis.’ (Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992: 33)*

The need is either to undertake a negotiated study, or one in which stringent steps are taken to anonymise both individuals and the study site. Whilst in certain circumstances a negotiated study may be the most appropriate way of researching a community, this research is not a community study. The approach is dictated by the research questions, which focus on the household work strategies of individual households.

This in turn shaped how the ethical factors were taken into consideration in the design of the research process for this study, and have informed both the presentation of the research findings and their analysis. The research proposal received specific ethical approval from the University of Sheffield in December 2015. Researching the informal economy and household strategies presented a number of specific challenges.

- Whilst the informal economy has been defined for the purposes as that which would be otherwise legal if requirements regarding taxation, social insurance and regulatory compliance were met, the possibility that criminal activity might be revealed by participants was possible.
- Information that participants could have disclosed, for example regarding working whilst claiming, non-payment of tax, or breach of planning regulations could leave them open to civil or criminal prosecution if disclosed.

- The locality in question, like other mining communities, has higher than average levels of limiting long-term illness and disability (Beatty & Fothergill, 2002, 2005; Fothergill, Beatty, & Gore, 2012; Riva, Terashima, Curtis, Shucksmith, & Carlebach, 2011). Support for older and disabled friends, neighbours and relatives was seen as likely to be a significant issue for household work strategies before the research commenced. The experience of research confirmed this and participants revealed information to the researcher which was highly sensitive.
- The community involved is small and close-knit, and even with the anonymisation approaches adopted by some disciplines such as anthropology, could be identifiable to well-informed readers with a knowledge of the Yorkshire coalfield. For this reason the names of the village was anonymised, and participant's identities will be protected in the process of writing up findings, and reported comments which could identify individuals or the village were not used.

Initial reference was made to a number of relevant ethical frameworks. The first of these was Sheffield University's published ethical guidance for researchers (University of Sheffield, 2012d), in particular the duty

*'to protect the dignity, rights, safety and well-being of human participants'*

Additional guidance was also drawn from the specific guidance on consent; participant safety and well-being; anonymity and confidentiality (University of Sheffield, 2012b,

2012e, 2012c), and crucially from the point of view of the current study, research involving illegal activities (University of Sheffield, 2012a).

As an investigation addressing a number of academic disciplines and subject areas, notably sociology, the ethical codes of relevant professional bodies were also considered. These included the ethical codes of the British Sociological Association and the American Sociological Association (American Sociological Association, 2008; British Sociological Association, 2004). Sheffield University guidance made clear the importance of maintaining professional standards, documenting results and questioning one's own findings. This led to a consideration by the researcher about personal views and beliefs, as well as frequent reflection on their impact on the research process<sup>31</sup>.

The research was explained at every stage to potential participants, and informed consent was sought from them before any survey work or interviews. Completed consent forms, completed questionnaires for the quantitative element of the research, as well as interview scripts for the qualitative element of the research, were collated and included on a database, and were stored securely in a locked filing-cabinet for the duration of the research. They will be shredded after the completion of the research process. The

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<sup>31</sup> In terms of personal views and beliefs, these were shaped by an association with mining communities over many years, starting with political activism during the Miner's Strike of 1984-85; by professional work in economic development and regeneration in a coal-mining area from 1988; and by continuing political activism, including thirteen years as a Councillor between 1991 and 2004 in Leeds, representing wards which had working coal mines until the 1960's. They were also formed by working with ex-miners at Wakefield Council, and having as a ward colleague a Councillor who was a leading National Union of Mineworkers activist in the Selby Coalfield. Whilst this inevitably meant an engagement and sympathy with mining communities, it also shaped an appreciation of their limits, and their cultural strengths and weaknesses, in particular a political culture which could lapse into chauvinism and patronage, and which exposed the strengths and weaknesses of Labourism. These perspectives are also informed by currently living in an ex-mining community in South Yorkshire.



resulting anonymised datasets will be stored on a password-protected secure area within the University file-system, accessible only to the researcher.

### **3.8 Conclusions**

This chapter has set out the methods and research approach which informed the study, as well as clarifying issues relating to ethics and the personal position of the researcher. The reasons for the adoption of the case study approach have been set out, as well as the advantages of this particular area as a site for the research. The interview schedule and its design have been discussed, along with how data was analysed. The progress of research from December 2016 through to May 2017 has been described along with the details of ethical approaches and approvals. Having covered these issues, the next chapter will examine the village context of the study in more detail, before findings are outlined in subsequent chapters.

## 4. Ballyhenry: The Context

### 4.1 Introduction

Whilst ‘Ballyhenry’, the community that formed the subject of this study, has not been identified to protect the anonymity of participants, it is important to provide some detailed background which places aspects of the lives of the respondents and their households in context. This chapter is intended to do this. Specific local details which could lead to the village being identified are not included, and no maps or photographs are included anywhere in this thesis. Similarly, relevant census enumeration boundaries are not identified. This chapter is structured as follows. First there is a short description of the local economic context, which is then related to developments nationally. Key local data is then set out in a local profile, and this is followed by discussions of the local environment, local facilities and investment and relevant aspects of national and local policies.

It is sufficient for the purposes of the current study to state that Ballyhenry lies in what was the Yorkshire coalfield, within the Wakefield Metropolitan District. Like most of the Wakefield District, it lies on the sandstone and shale of the coal measures, which results in a rounded and rolling topography. Wakefield, Barnsley and Doncaster are the nearest large towns. Wakefield Council is the local authority for the area, but like many villages in the Yorkshire coalfield, it also has a Parish Council which acts as an advocate for the community, and works with other neighbouring Parish Councils to provide some local facilities and services. The village is close to the boundaries with the neighbouring South

Yorkshire boroughs, and is equidistant between Sheffield and Leeds, with some local residents commuting to both cities.

Ballyhenry is situated on two main roads, and its shape reflects that; it represents the gradual coalescence of three separate areas of settlement, an area of mainly 19<sup>th</sup> Century and early 20<sup>th</sup> Century houses and shops at the bottom end of the village, pre- and post-war housing along one of the main roads, and a cluster of farms at the top of the village. Housing has developed along these roads, mainly during the last century, although there has been further development on a number of greenfield sites in and around the village in the last two decades.

## **4.2 The Local Economic Context**

The village dates back to medieval times. Whilst it is not mentioned in the Domesday Book, it does appear on 12<sup>th</sup> Century maps and charters and for most of the subsequent centuries it was an agricultural hamlet. Its circumstances changed with the eastward expansion of the Yorkshire coalfield, driven by increasing demand, the development of the railways and improved mining technology. This led to the opening of a number of local coal mines in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries, with four mines opening within five miles of the village between 1866 and 1903. All the local villages expanded to accommodate miners and their families moving from elsewhere in Britain and Ireland, with significant private sector housing development mainly for rent before the First

World War, and further development of Council and NCB<sup>32</sup>-owned housing in subsequent decades. As discussed in previous chapters, the village falls within the definition of a mining community recognised for policy purposes (Foden, Fothergill, & Gore, 2014).

The area's last collieries closed in 1993. The decline in mining employment over the period from 1981 to 1993 was considerable. In 1981, mines in the Wakefield District employed over 17,000 people (Kojan, 2004). This total did not include Wakefield residents working in North Yorkshire collieries such as Kellingley, and the pits of the Selby coalfield, or in South Yorkshire pits such as Grimethorpe.

Mining in Yorkshire mainly employed men, there was little of the women's employment in mining that characterised older coalfields such as Lancashire, and initially women tended to work at home supporting families. However, after the First World War women in coalfield areas were increasingly employed in industries such as garment manufacture and mail-order warehouses. Particularly in the post-Second World War era, companies in these sectors structured their shifts and working patterns around women's childcare and family patterns, and in some cases organised transport to work. In the Wakefield area employers in these sectors included garment manufacturers such as Berwin and Berwin, S.R. Gent, Burberry and Double Two shirts, and in mail order Empire Stores was an important employer until the early 2000's.

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<sup>32</sup> National Coal Board

Economic change in all three sectors had an impact locally. The contraction of the mining industry is the most obvious, especially when the loss in associated engineering companies is considered. However, the collapse of British garment manufacture, and in particular the end of Marks and Spencer's UK clothing procurement had a significant effect on women's employment across the UK coalfields (Toms & Zhang, 2016), with companies such as S.R. Gent disappearing as major employers (Mesure, 2005). Sectoral change also affected the mail order industry, and Empire Stores closed its Wakefield facility in 2008.

Therefore the village in this study has experienced significant change since 1980, when collieries within five miles of the village employed over five thousand men, and thousands more women worked in local garment factories. Some of these jobs have been replaced in logistics, although local logistics operators recruit from a much wider catchment area. In the intervening years, road links to the national motorway network have improved substantially, and commuting to cities like Sheffield and Leeds has become more widespread. In industrial terms, the major local employers are either in the public sector or in logistics, and the Wakefield District, because of its location bounded by the M1, A1 and M62 has the highest concentration of logistics employment of any UK local authority (Kumi-Ampofo, Bowes, Woolley, & McTigue, 2014; Taylor, 2005).

### 4.3 The National Context: Economic Change

The research which Ray Pahl led in Sheppey described in *Divisions of Labour* (Pahl, 1984), needs to be seen in the context of his wider work to develop an understanding of changes in working lives in Britain in the 1970's and likely future trends. With Jonathan Gershuny, he recognised both the impact of economic retrenchment brought on by the 1974 oil price crisis, as well as the impact of new technology. As they pointed out in a 1979 paper:

*'It is now common ground that, on present trends, and without radical changes in social policy, opportunities to work in 'the economy' may be expected to decline within Britain... The decline itself is assumed even by the most optimistic participants in the debate' (Gershuny & Pahl, 1979: 1)*

This, they suggested, necessitated a radical rethinking of what was defined as the economic, and they argued that

*'Only by bringing together employment in the 'formal economy' with all the other different sorts of economic activity that take place outside it, can we be in a better position to devise appropriate public policies' (Gershuny & Pahl, 1979: 1)*

Such speculations were widespread at the time - discussions of a future of shorter working hours and more leisure featured in this researcher's A Level Economics and Geography studies - but economic and technological changes have not ushered in shorter

working hours for full-time employees or greater leisure, and the number of employees in the UK economy has continued to grow. Change has happened, and this change in the period from 1980 to 2017 is the focus of this section, but that change has been very different to what was anticipated.

Gershuny and Pahl were prescient to a degree however, and their focus on what was happening at the level of the household highlighted some important trends for the future. The conventional economic wisdom at this time was that service sector employment would continue to grow, and at a global level this was correct; however they highlight an expectation that services purchased by households would be a significant element of this expansion. This did not turn out to be the case, with households opting to buy goods, in effect capital equipment, which they then substituted for purchased services, most obviously items such as washing machines substituting for laundry services. This has proceeded, with the introduction of the microwave allowing the widespread use of ready meals, and the rapidly changing infrastructure of home media and home entertainment replacing purchased services such as cinema attendance.

Pahl's Sheppey research has informed and shaped this current study; there are some commonalities between the Sheppey of the late-1970's and Ballyhenry in 2016-2017, and some of Pahl's co-researchers have suggested it has a relevance in understanding the impact of the post-2007 recession in declining communities (Crow, Hatton, Lyon, & Strangleman, 2009). Both are overwhelmingly white post-industrial working-class communities, and both evolved to serve a single industry; in Sheppey's case the Royal

Navy dockyard at Sheerness (closed in 1960) and in Ballyhenry's case the deep mines which opened in this part of south-west Yorkshire in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Both experience isolation - Sheppey has only one bridge connecting it to the rest of Kent, and Ballyhenry, like many Yorkshire mining villages, has poor public transport links to cities such as Wakefield, Barnsley, Doncaster, Sheffield and Leeds. It can be argued that they are places apart, with linkages to wider regional economies that are circumscribed by those poor connections and where the widespread migration which characterises cities within their regions has not happened.

At the same time the two cases are very different; geographically in terms of settlement patterns and proximity to major centres of population and more importantly in terms of their historical context. Pahl's Sheppey studies took place before the major economic changes of the 1980's, and whilst in some respects he anticipates those changes, in other ways he did not, indeed could not. The Ballyhenry research reflects instead a community and a sub-region which is arguably post-industrial, and which has experienced the most significant process of de-industrialisation in British history. With that de-industrialisation - which saw not just the end of coal production in the UK, but the effective end of mass clothing manufacture and major contractions in engineering, chemicals and glass manufacture, all of which were important locally - came huge social and economic change. Whilst this study can draw from the Pahl research it also needs to recognise the importance of historic (and geographic) specificity as argued by Hodgson in his criticisms of the academic direction taken by mainstream economics (Hodgson, 2002).



What are those changes which have had such an impact in the period between 1980 and 2017? The economic changes are well-rehearsed. Deep mining employed 20,000 people, mostly men, in the Wakefield District in 1980, and employs none now. Major UK clothing retailers such as Marks and Spencer sourced the vast majority of their products from UK manufacturers in 1980, with manufacturers such as Burton, Hepworth, S.R. Gent and Berwins, all based within the region, supplying much of this. The same picture applies to fields as diverse as mining equipment and rolling stock manufacture. In their place came limited growth in new areas of manufacturing, some growth in services such as telephone banking and insurance, and significant growth in the importance of retail, distribution and logistics, with all three of the major coalfield local authorities in Yorkshire now major centres of the UK logistics industry.

Equally important are changes in the organisation of work and patterns of consumption which arose during the period. In part these were a response to economic change, in part the result of technological change. These include the end of vertical integration within the majority of organisations, whether in the public or private sector. This particularly affected the Wakefield economy, as an area with a small number of major employers.

The NCB is a case in point, as a large organisation with a core business, mining coal, which also encompassed a wide range of ancillary functions and created units within the organisation to deliver them - canteens, a logistics function, the development of new coal mines and seams, workshops where a wide range of mining equipment was maintained, a large human resources function, research and development - all delivered

at locations within the coalfield. Whilst colliery closures were a feature of the coal industry after the 1984-85 strike, so was the externalisation and loss of these support functions, with workshops closing by the early-1990's and other functions such as the development of new coal faces and roadways externalised. British Coal was, of course, eventually privatised itself in 1994.

Other local examples of closing functions within a vertically integrated organisation included the supermarket ASDA's manufacturing operations in Wakefield, closed in 1993 with the loss of 1300 jobs as part of a cost-cutting process within the company (Wilkinson, 1993). Similar developments also took place within the public sector, as a response to the Thatcher Government's privatisation agenda, initially within the NHS and then in Local Government.

These processes of privatisation, externalisation and outsourcing both changed many working lives and ended others. They can be seen as both part of a much wider attack aimed at the post-war Keynesian consensus. This had two discrete sub-elements. First, the process of extracting greater shareholder value in the private sector by relentless cost-cutting and dispensing with activities which did not generate a return such as research and development, detailed for example by Peston (Peston, 2008); and second, parallel processes in the public sector. The first of these was the privatisation of nationalised industries, starting with British Telecom, followed by the power and water industries, and continuing with British Coal and British Rail. The second was enforced externalisation in local government, driven initially by the 1988 Local Government and Housing Act. This, combined with audit and financial regimes forcing internal trading

within local government, limited the scope of local authorities to ensure good terms and conditions for employees.

The effect of these processes was to remove huge swathes of jobs in industry and the public sector in the 1980's and 1990's, and to make those which remained more precarious. Whilst there was a slowing-down in this process during the New Labour years it never halted completely and the district was heavily hit by the loss of coal-mining jobs at the Prince of Wales Colliery in Pontefract in 2002 (Pontefract and Castleford Express, 2002), and of the five mines of the Selby complex in 2004 (Hughes, 2004; Macalister, 2002). The nature of this precariousness changed overtime; and viewed through the prism of Wakefield's economy it was not just a simple process of imposing casualisation across the local economy. Many of those displaced never worked again, with Fothergill, Beatty and others highlighting the tacit use of disability benefits by Government over much of the 1980's and 1990's to mask the real rate of unemployment (Beatty & Fothergill, 1996, 2005). So, for one group of workers, their post-redundancy experience involved moving out of the workforce completely. For others, albeit a small group, the process was one of moving up - with limited numbers returning to learning, gaining higher-level qualifications and securing better jobs<sup>33</sup>. Other redundant workers leaving mining or engineering, in particular for those with craft or technical training the process was one of moving across, and working in similar technical areas with a new employer. Finally, many moved down - into insecure self-employment in fields such as painting and

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<sup>33</sup> Including a number of the researcher's work colleagues.

decorating or window-cleaning<sup>34</sup>, or unskilled work in fields such as security guarding and warehousing.

For the final group, new employment often resulted in an end to traditional contractual arrangements, and in particular from the late-1980's, progressively heavier use of employment agencies, particularly in logistics and food-related businesses; with some residual cash-in-hand working, particularly in marginal fields and in parts of the building trade<sup>35</sup>. Initially employment agencies had a very poor reputation in the locality. Most were small, locally-owned and lacked the will or the management capacity to maintain practices which were legal.

However, in the wider area around the research site, the entry of major multinational-owned logistics operations from the mid-1990's onwards changed this - whilst employers still wanted to use agencies to source staff, they also wanted to minimise the number of contractual arrangements they had with providers, as well as ensuring their sub-contractors met legal standards and minimised reputational damage. This meant a greater reliance on larger employment agencies, and for some employers a return to direct employment other than at peak times. Nevertheless, key features remained (and remain) constant. Other than skilled staff, workers start with employers initially on an agency basis, effectively undergoing a prolonged probationary period. From employment patterns which reflected negotiation between employers and unions both in the coal

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<sup>34</sup> Many of the small businesses started in the coalfields, particularly in the immediate aftermath of the post-strike and Heseltine closures were barely viable (Turner & Gregory, 1995). Enterprise support from the Department of Employment and Training and Enterprise Councils provided support for start-up, but none for closure, bankruptcy and insolvency. A key role for the researcher's team during this period was helping individuals close their businesses whilst safeguarding assets, particularly their homes. This legacy of failure of marginal businesses was a factor in widespread negative attitudes to self-employment.

<sup>35</sup> Based on the researcher's own experience, and that of advice workers in local agencies.

industry, and in other fields such as garment manufacture - weekday working, premium payments for overtime and weekend working - local employers have moved to variants of a 24-hour operation, either to maximise the use of capital assets or more often in response to customer demand, with enhanced payments for anti-social hours now a rarity.

One key feature of this across the coalfield has been the growth of zero-hours contracts in fields such as logistics and retail. Detailed figures are relatively difficult to obtain, with Labour Force Survey figures aggregated at regional level (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Table 4.1 shows that Yorkshire and the Humber has one of the highest level of zero-hours working of any UK region (after the East Midlands and South West) in the post-2015 period. Anecdotal evidence gathered from economic development professionals working in the Wakefield area suggests that these contracts are an issue with some local employers, although approaches and cultures vary significantly between companies.

**Table 4.1 Level and Rate of People on Zero-Hours Contracts, By Region**

April-June, each year

UK, not seasonally adjusted

<b>April - June 2017</b>	In employment on a zero-hours contract (thousands)	Percentage of people in employment on a zero-hours contract	<b>April - June 2016</b>	In employment on a zero-hours contract (thousands)	Percentage of people in employment on a zero-hours contract
UK	883	2.8	UK	903	2.9
England	758	2.8	England	768	2.9
North East	45	3.7	North East	34	2.8
North West	67	2.0	North West	102	3.0
Yorkshire and The Humber	63	2.5	Yorkshire and The Humber	87	3.4
East Midlands	75	3.4	East Midlands	83	3.6
West Midlands	72	2.7	West Midlands	79	3.0
East of England	83	2.7	East of England	72	2.4
London	117	2.5	London	95	2.1
South East	136	3.0	South East	127	2.8
South West	100	3.6	South West	90	3.3
Wales	46	3.2	Wales	42	2.9
Scotland	71	2.7	Scotland	78	3.0
Northern Ireland	8	1.0	Northern Ireland <sup>1</sup>	-	-

Source: ONS Labour Force Survey

A number of reports highlight problematic employment practices in the logistics sector, with for example, Ball et al. highlighting abusive practice by Sports Direct at Shirebrook in Derbyshire (Ball, Hampton, Kamerade, & Richardson, 2017). Kik et al., in a report for the Director of Labour Market Enforcement have highlighted poor practice across logistics, and suggest a particular enforcement focus in localities with higher levels of unemployment and greater use of employment agencies (Kik et al., 2019); and Kennedy et al. arguing that employment conditions are worsening across the labour market (Kennedy, Shaheen, & Jesse, 2019).

Other developments have also contributed to changing working practices during the years since 1980. The first and most important has been the growth of women's working, and the expansion of work-roles available to women in the period, allied to changes in many areas of employment, particularly in the public sector, to allow for job-sharing and

part-time working. Along with this, new roles have developed - notably call-centre work, particularly in banking and financial services, but increasingly in public sector settings such as the NHS - and locations in West and South Yorkshire proved attractive to companies such as First Direct from the 1990's onwards. The locations chosen - on or close to motorways and major roads in areas such as the Dearne Valley or the M62 corridor - are within commuting distance of villages such as Ballyhenry.

In addition, as part of measures to reduce costs a number of key public sector employers have consolidated operations at office parks on or near motorway junctions. Combined with the growth of the logistics industry, this has shifted the economic geography of West and South Yorkshire from town centres and the resource-driven industrial locations of the past to the region's motorway junctions; resulting in significant increases in commuting, particularly by road. Whilst nationally commuting figures have been static in the last decade (Le Vine, Polak, & Humphrey, 2016), this has not applied locally (Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, 2016; West Yorkshire Combined Authority, 2016), and national commuting figures discount multi-point journeys, for example when parents leave children with childminders or at school on the way to work, or go to a supermarket on the way home.

At the same time as working patterns have changed, so has consumption. For most households in advanced economies, the most important single item they consume is housing, with the average proportion of household income spent on housing costs doubling between 1957 and 2017 (Office for National Statistics, 2017; Tetlow, 2018). This is partly a result of increasing levels of household formation but primarily arises as a

result of constraints in housing supply. The UK experienced significant changes in its housing system primarily as a result of the 1980 Housing Act which introduced a right for tenants to buy their own council houses at substantial discounts, and which resulted in almost two million houses moving into private ownership by 2014 (Murie, 2014). The 1980's also featured relatively high levels of housing construction in the private sector, although this slowed down as a result of more restrictive planning policies under the post-1991 Major government (Stewart, 2013), specifically the introduction of a plan-led system by John Selwyn Gummer as Secretary of State for the Environment. In addition Conservative Governments were antipathetic to new building by councils, and instead favoured development by housing associations, a policy which largely continued under New Labour (Murie, 2018).

Other aspects of consumption have also changed significantly in the period. Retail has seen massive consolidation, with smaller supermarket chains, both regionally-based chains such as Hillards, Grandways and William Low, and national operators such as Safeway absorbed by the current major supermarket groups - Tesco, Morrison's, Sainsbury's and ASDA. Parallel to this, supermarkets have progressively expanded their product ranges into new areas, notably financial services, clothing and electrical goods, as well as introducing new technologies such as barcode scanning (introduced in the US in 1974) linked to point-of-sale and stock-control software, new delivery channels such as internet shopping, home deliveries and self-service checkouts, and the introduction of loyalty schemes such as the Tesco Clubcard introduced in 1995.



During much of the period between Pahl's research and the 2007 crash, the business model of the supermarkets delivered increasing market-share and progressively reduced the importance of small independent retailers, as well as taking market-share from traditional department stores. Tesco's UK market share, for example, grew from just over 14% in 1982 to 31% in 2006, declining to 27.8% in 2018 (Fooddeserts.org, 2019). Similar levels of growth (and more recently decline) have affected the other major supermarkets, a result of increasing competition from the German discounters, Aldi and LIDL.

It is important to see the growth of supermarkets and the decline of urban markets, independent retailers and traditional department stores in a wider context. Supermarkets are not simply retailers of groceries and household goods. Whilst the German discounters have taken a 'no-frills' approach, the other major supermarkets are integrated businesses offering a wide range of goods and services. As Round states (Round, 2006: 54),

*'Few would dispute that the 'product' sold by supermarkets is really a bundle of goods, services, customer convenience, and other shopping characteristics that yield greater utility to consumers in the bundle than if the bundle were disaggregated and all constituent items were purchased separately. But this begs the question of what constituent goods should be included in the bundle...'*

It is also important to recognise that supermarkets have developed new formats in urban areas, as described by Schultz et al. in France (Schultz, Chaney, & Debenedetti, 2016);

although interviews with customers revealed that they had not noticed many of the carefully developed branding propositions introduced by management at central and local level. What customers wanted was to get shopping simply without fuss. Supermarkets have also introduced internet shopping, as well as self-scan and scan and go technologies which are discussed by Bulmer et al. and Elms et al. (Bulmer, Elms, & Moore, 2018; Elms, de Kervenoael, & Hallsworth, 2016). Again, both pieces highlight a desire for shopping without fuss, and varying attitudes amongst customers to these technologies, with positive preferences among younger shoppers particularly.

This leads to further questions about consumption, particularly the increasing role of self-provisioning; as well as what Glucksmann describes as a Total Social Organisation of Labour approach (Glucksmann, 2006, 2009, 2013; Glucksmann & Wheeler, 2013). Between 1980 and the present, the way in which households source and package services - whether financial services such as banking or insurance, holidays, domestic repairs and utilities - has changed significantly. In financial services, for example the industry was characterised by vertical integration in the early-1980's with companies such as the Prudential still maintaining large field-staffs and local offices and agencies. Both Government regulation, and changing practice in the industry, led to a move away from this model towards a separation between financial advisers and the companies putting together products and managing funds. This trend gained traction in the wake of pensions mis-selling scandals which disproportionately affected those leaving industries such as coal and steel, and has developed further as a result of the growth of internet services such as telephone and internet banking.

Internet banking and internet shopping are of course predicated on internet access. Problems with internet access in rural areas have been highlighted in a succession of House of Commons Select Committee Reports, and in the national press (Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee, 2015, 2019; Rudgard, 2018); and this has particular importance in the context of government policies to deliver public services such as benefit payments on a digital-by-default basis, and for people with limited digital skills and low levels of functional literacy. Whilst broadband access has improved in many rural communities, including coalfield communities, in recent years as detailed by Ofcom (Ofcom, 2018, 2019), problems in terms of access to skills remain, as highlighted by French et al. (French, Quinn, & Yates, 2019). They discuss the contradiction of people who use social media tools such as Whatsapp and Facebook, but do not regard themselves as ‘on the internet’, as well as those who do not use digital technology at all. Both situations can potentially be explained by either lack of digital skills or a broader lack of basic skills, and both situations reveal individuals and groups who may not be in a position to access or make judgements on, for example, retirement savings options on a price comparison website. In this context it is important to note that both the UK (Department for Business Innovation and Skills, 2012; OECD, 2016) Government and the OECD have highlighted significant basic skills deficits amongst many adults in the UK, deficits which closely correspond with economic and social disadvantage<sup>36</sup>.

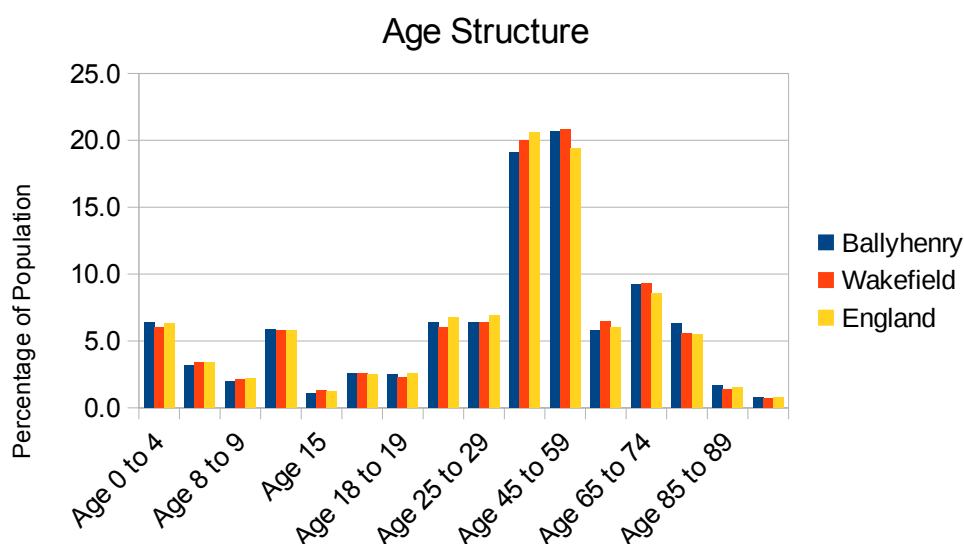
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<sup>36</sup> A problem which the researcher has encountered throughout his professional and political life, and more recently working with self-scan and ‘scan and go’ technology in a supermarket. In his experience significant numbers of older people have literacy difficulties they have concealed for many years.

## 4.4 Village Profile

This section outlines key data for the village from the 2011 census. Ballyhenry is two contiguous former mining villages, with a resident population of just over 6000 in the 2011 census, a rise from just under 5600 in the 2001 census. The villages cover most of four Lower Level Social Output Areas. A few streets in a neighbouring village, separated from Ballyhenry by a mile of agricultural land, are included in one of these. All statistics for the villages are derived by aggregating these four SOA's together, apart from those for internal migration. Migration statistics are instead derived from a Middle Level SOA, and one Ballyhenry Lower Level SOA is not included in this. Ballyhenry's age profile is broadly similar to that of Wakefield and the UK as a whole, although there are slightly higher numbers of older people.

**Figure 4.1 Age Structure.**



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In terms of economic activity levels Table 4.2 shows that Ballyhenry's population is significantly less likely to be economically active (63% of the 16-74 age-group) than in the rest of the Wakefield District (68%) and England (70%). Nevertheless this figure represents a significant increase from the 2001 census, when only 56% of the population was economically active. This can partly be explained by a reduction in the levels of long-term sickness amongst the 16-74 age group during the period (from 13% down to 8%). The most likely explanation for this is the progressive decline in the numbers of ex-miners on incapacity-related benefits within the 16-74 age group during the period. Government policy during the 1980's and 1990's moved many ex-miners onto these benefits, as detailed by Beatty and Fothergill in a number of studies (Beatty & Fothergill, 1996, 2005). It is also worth noting that levels of self-employment are marginally lower than the rest of Wakefield or England as a whole.

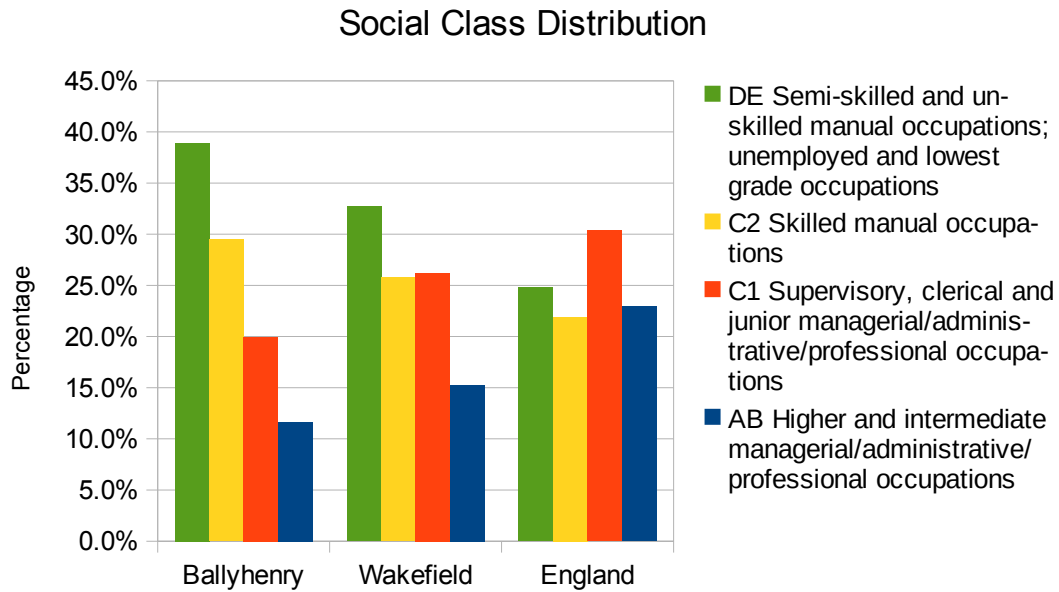
**Table 4.2 Economic Activity**

	Ballyhenry	Wakefield	England
Economically active: Total	63.5%	68.4%	69.9%
Economically active: Employee: Part-time	14.0%	14.8%	13.7%
Economically active: Employee: Full-time	36.1%	39.7%	38.6%
Economically active: Self-employed with employees: Part-time	0.2%	0.3%	0.4%
Economically active: Self-employed with employees: Full-time	2.0%	2.1%	2.6%
Economically active: Self-employed without employees: Part-time	1.6%	1.6%	2.5%
Economically active: Self-employed without employees: Full-time	3.5%	3.5%	5.0%
Economically active: Unemployed	5.2%	4.9%	4.4%
Economically active: Full-time student	1.6%	2.1%	3.4%
Economically inactive: Total	36.5%	31.6%	30.1%
Economically inactive: Retired	16.2%	16.1%	13.7%
Economically inactive: Student (including full-time students)	4.1%	3.5%	5.8%
Economically inactive: Looking after home or family	5.6%	4.0%	4.4%
Economically inactive: Long-term sick or disabled	8.2%	5.8%	4.0%
Economically inactive: Other	2.3%	2.2%	2.2%

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Ballyhenry's social composition also diverges from local and national patterns, as shown in Figure 4.2.

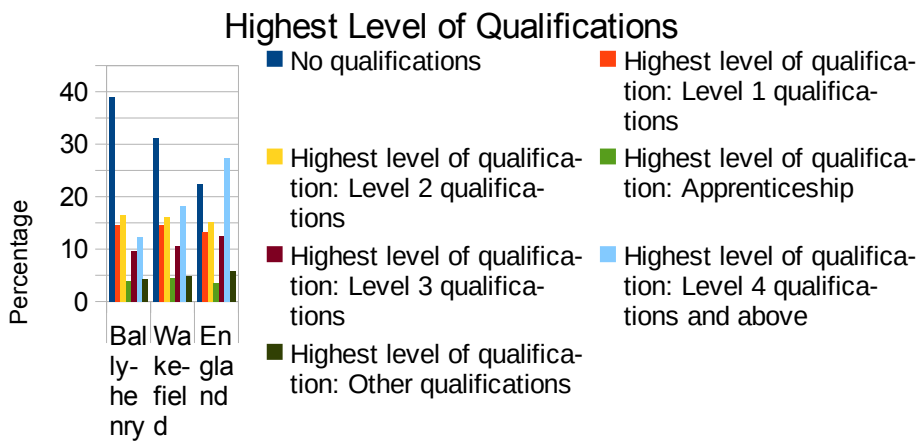
**Figure 4.2 Social Class**



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Figure 4.3 shows the village has significantly more residents in semi-skilled and unskilled occupations, and fewer in skilled, managerial or professional jobs than both the rest of the Wakefield District, and England as a whole.

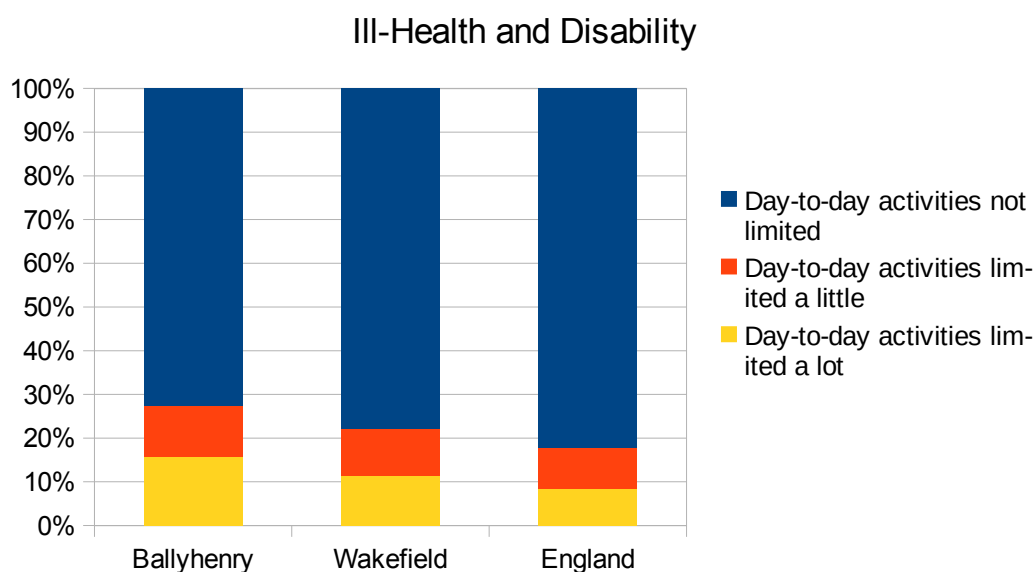
**Figure 4.3 Qualifications**



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A similar pattern applies in relation to qualification levels, as shown in Figure 4.3. The significantly higher level of individuals with no qualifications, as well as the lower level of qualifications at Level 4 and above are particularly apparent. Residents are also more likely to experience long-term ill-health or disability, as shown in Table 4.4.

**Figure 4.4 Long-term sickness and disability**



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Another significant issue, linked to levels of long-term illness and disability are the numbers of people undertaking unpaid care for others, as illustrated in Table 4.3

**Table 4.3 Individuals providing unpaid care**

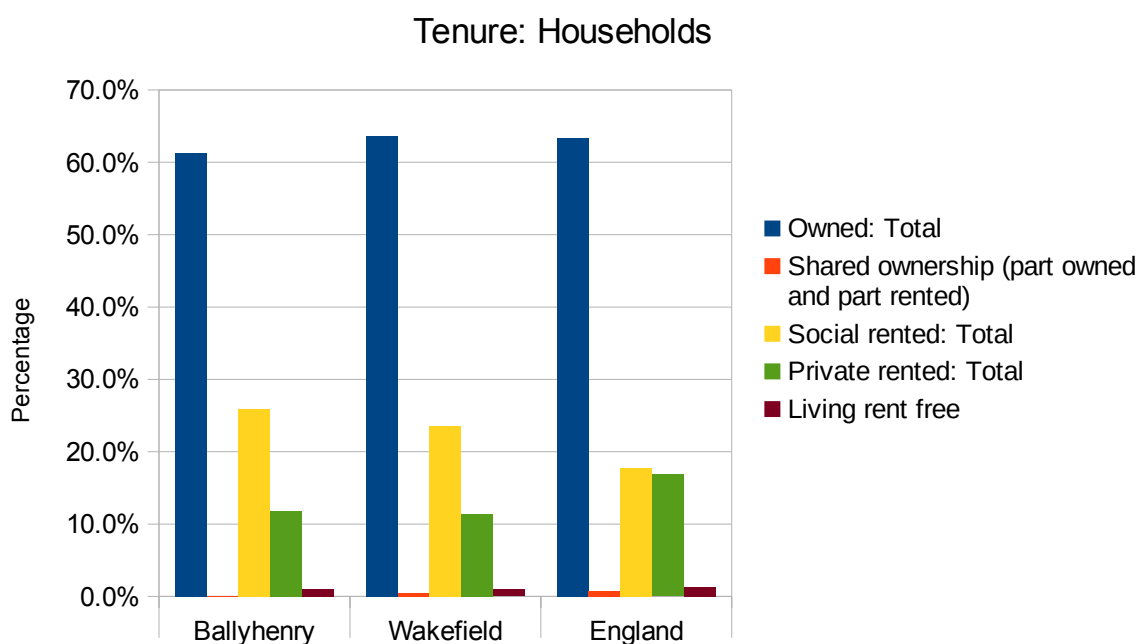
	Provides no unpaid care	Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care	Provides 20 to 49 hours of unpaid care	Provides 50 or more hours of unpaid care
Ballyhenry	87.8%	5.8%	1.9%	4.4%
Wakefield	88.8%	6.5%	1.7%	3.1%
England	89.8%	6.5%	1.4%	2.4%

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The proportion of people undertaking more than 20 hours of unpaid care is higher than the rest of Wakefield and England as a whole.

Another area in which the village differs, both from the rest of the Wakefield District, and from England as a whole is the question of housing tenure. Whilst levels of home ownership are broadly similar, Ballyhenry has higher levels of social renting than both Wakefield and all of England. Private renting is less significant in both Wakefield and Ballyhenry than in the rest of England, as shown in Figure 4.6

**Figure 4.6 Tenure by household**



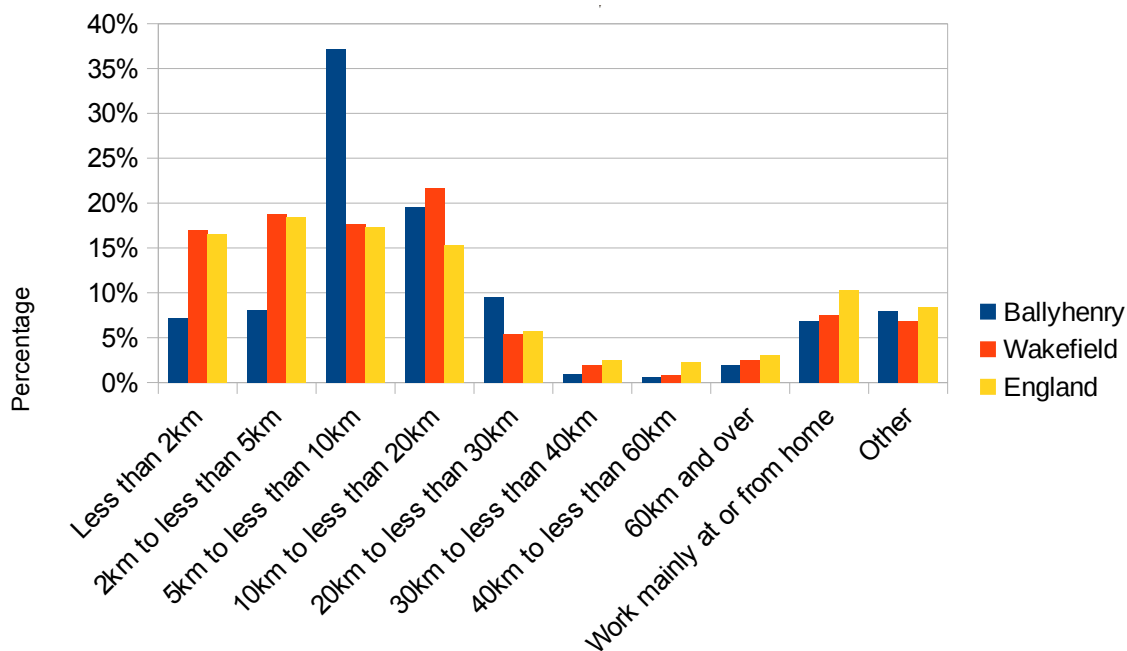
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A further area of divergence between Ballyhenry, and Wakefield and the rest of England is in relation to commuting patterns. Significantly fewer Ballyhenry residents commute



short distances (under 5km/3.1 miles), but significantly more Ballyhenry residents commute between 5km and 10 km (6.2 miles) reflecting the village’s location in relation to key employment sites, as shown in Figure 4.7.

**Figure 4.7 Distance Travelled to Work: Residents**



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Whilst car ownership in the village is marginally lower than district or national averages, car dependency is a significant issue which will be discussed in subsequent chapters in relation to respondents household strategies. Table 4.4 shows a selection of journey times to key employment sites, which are not named to prevent identification.

**Table 4.4 Journey Times to Key Employment Locations**

Destination	Shortest time (Public Transport)	Changes	Car Journey Time	Distance (km)
City Centre A	1hr 45 mins	1	1h	51
City Centre B	1hr 29 mins	2	1hr	35
Town Centre A	1hr 21 mins	1	45 mins	26
Town Centre B	50 mins	0	25 mins	13
Town Centre C	41 mins	1	22 mins	12
Distribution Centre A	1hr 30	2	24 mins	12
Distribution Centre B	57 mins	1	33 mins	14
Distribution Centre C	1hr	2	16 mins	18
Distribution Centre D	1 hr 18 mins	1	22 mins	19

*Public transport figures based on the shortest weekday journey between 07:00 and 09:00, (West Yorkshire Metro Journey Planner); Car journey times based on shortest weekday journey, leaving 07:00, (Google Maps)*

It takes significantly longer to get to key employment locations by public transport than by car.

To conclude, Ballyhenry as a village has a slightly higher age profile than either the surrounding district or the country as a whole; has lower economic activity rates and a higher concentration of residents in unskilled and semi-skilled occupations; and has qualification levels significantly below district or national averages. A higher proportion of residents experience disability or ill-health, and slightly more undertake over fifty hours per week of unpaid care. Levels of social renting are higher than across the district or nationally, and levels of private renting are very significantly below national

levels. Finally, residents are significantly less likely to work within five kilometres of home, and significantly more like to work between five and ten kilometres from home.

## **4.5 Local Environment**

It may seem a truism to state that most mining jobs were underground, but one of the consequences of this was that once headgear, surface buildings and spoil-heaps was removed, mining areas started to return to rurality. All of the local colliery sites have now been reclaimed, either for industrial uses or as landscaped recreational areas. Ballyhenry existed as an agricultural hamlet for at least eight hundred years before the advent of deep-mining in this part of Yorkshire in the late-Nineteenth Century, and is now re-emerging as a settlement within an agricultural landscape. This landscape is dominated by crop production, with one respondent, whose family have farmed in the area since the 1930's, highlighting the transition from the mixed farming practised by her father to the intensive production of crops such as cereals and oilseed rape. Nearby former industrial features such as open-cast mining sites have been reclaimed as lakes, and along with reservoirs built during the development of England's canals, these are the centre-piece of a local country park. In addition, the village itself has an extensive network of off-road footpaths, and public open space.

The result is a local environment that people value, and which as will be evidenced in later chapters, most of the respondents used and appreciated, with activities including

walking with a local walking group, walking with children and dogs, tending an allotment and using the footpath network to visit relatives across the village.

## **4.6 Local Facilities and Investment**

Ballyhenry has two primary schools, a primary care centre and a part-time library. The village also has a sports centre with indoor and outdoor playing areas, and a community centre and parish hall which provides adult education classes. The former was developed by the Parish Council in partnership with the neighbouring Parish Council during the last Labour Government, utilising funds from sources such as the Coalfields Regeneration Trust. The latter dates from the 1970's but was substantially expanded in the 1990's to create classrooms and four small workshop units for new businesses. The village also has a Sub Post-Office.

In some respects the village was shaped by many decades of public investment, most obviously through the creation of new housing stock. The village expanded from the late-Nineteenth Century onwards to accommodate miners and their families working at local collieries, and in associated industries such as coking plants. As such, successive phases of development are clearly apparent in house-types and layouts, with pre-1919 properties at the village core, and successive estates built for the the-then National Coal Board and local authorities grouped along the main roads. There are also limited

numbers of privately built houses, as well as more recent small estates built from the 1980's and 1990's onwards.

This housing structure has a number of consequences. Most homes were built for the successive local authorities, and many are still let by Wakefield District Housing, the new social landlord created when Wakefield Council transferred its stock in 2005. This means that other than those houses where tenants have exercised their right-to-buy, most homes have been subject to refurbishment and improvement as part of the Decent Homes Programme (Comptroller and Auditor General, 2010; Penfold, 2015).

In other respects public investment had also shaped the village in a way which enabled research participants' lives and work strategies, notably through the creation of leisure facilities and open space; investment in training and economic development funded by the European Union, the UK Government and the Coalfields Regeneration Trust; and New Labour investment in public health facilities. Car dependence amongst respondents has already been highlighted. Growing car use has been enabled by highways investment by the UK Government and the Local Authority, which have significantly enhanced road access to the locality since the 1980's enabling speedy access to the national trunk road network. This is in contrast to public transport, where there have been no significant improvements to the local rail network since East Coast electrification, completed in 1991, and bus transport, where deregulation and reductions in subsidy mean that prices, frequencies and journey times have either worsened or stood still in the past decade.

## 4.7 The Policy Environment

Government policies with a spatial dimension, both central and local, had significant impacts on the lives of the households interviewed as part of the research, and a consideration of place-specific assets necessarily starts with the assets shaped by policy. The over-riding driver of policy locally was to address the effects of economic restructuring following the contraction of the coal industry from the 1970's onwards, and job-losses in other areas which were also experiencing restructuring such as garment-manufacture and engineering. This had left a legacy of environmental dereliction, and was also a factor in population decline, with potential consequences for the viability of schools and other services.

Under both Conservative and Labour Governments the local authority had secured resources and commitments to redevelop derelict sites as country parks, open space and recreational areas, and by the 1990's the area was becoming greener. Further derelict sites were reclaimed following the 1992 Heseltine closures.

These efforts to improve the local environment were accompanied by a succession of local planning policies which took a relatively permissive approach to new residential development, in particular development that would diversify tenure and stabilise population levels in coalfield communities. As a result, in the period between 1996 and 2007, almost 400 new houses were built in the village (Wakefield Metropolitan District Council, 2008). This approach also recognised that the housing stock mix in mining villages and surrounding communities needed re-shaping to meet market demand, and

reached its logical conclusion in the Housing Market Renewal programme in neighbouring South Yorkshire. Whilst the Wakefield District was outside South Yorkshire, some HMR resources were available to support improvements to residential areas locally, and land-use planning policies were strongly aligned with these objectives in successive development plans.

As will be described in the next three chapters, across the fieldwork it was also possible to track the impact of wider regeneration policies implemented by the local councils (at both parish and district levels), as well as the UK Government and the European Union. This included areas as diverse as public health, training and business development, and green infrastructure, as well as the land-use planning policies which supported housing growth. In turn, these had significant impacts on the household strategies of the respondents, which will also be discussed in subsequent chapters, helping to add to the understanding of communities in change and the impacts on those who live in them.

## 5.0 Paid Work and Study in Household Strategies

### 5.1 Introduction

*“It just got to a point. I did Kilimanjaro a couple of years ago, did that, and I think it was one of those epiphany moments where I thought I’m not getting any younger. And I’m always saying that to my kids. Do what makes you happy and chase your dreams. Find something you enjoy and try to find a job in it. And (so) I jacked it in...”*

*Mark (42)*

This quotation sets the context for an examination of the role of paid work and study in the lives of the households interviewed. Like most of the households in the study, Mark and his partner Katie had, for various reasons, made conscious decisions that paid work was not going to be the only focus in their lives. For every household different factors were at work - health, new relationships, and desires for individual and collective fulfilment. This chapter explores these issues for these households through examining three over-arching themes

- To describe the **context** of paid work and study in the lives of the households, and its impact.



- To identify the enablers which households have to help them manage the demands of paid work and study, in particular the role of networks outside the household.

- To identify the constraints which households experience in balancing paid work and other demands, and the presence or absence of support from family members and others.

Key issues arising from these themes are then identified, and conclusions for further discussion are drawn.

## 5.2 Background

This chapter examines the relationship between individuals' work and study, and their personal and household networks. Paid work was important for most of the respondents. Of the seventeen interviews, ten were with households where at least one adult was currently in paid work. Where there were two partners in the home, in most cases both partners were working. Three further interviews took place with households where the adults were of working age - in two of them, at least one adult had a full-time carer, and in the other household the individual (David) had recently become unemployed after a period of work in the Middle East.

In the other households where no one was in paid work members were retired (five individuals in four households), or full-time carers for elderly or disabled relatives (four individuals in three households). Only one interviewee (David) was in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance, and one (John) on Incapacity Benefit. The full-time carers were mostly receiving Carers Allowance, apart from Gillian who was supported by her husband Terry, and received Disability Living Allowance for her three sons. Balancing paid work with their other roles in the household was, therefore, a significant issue for the majority of the research participants.

The households interviewed were mostly incomers to the village, and were more likely to be in skilled manual or professional occupations than most local people. The paid work which they undertook was highly varied. For these research participants, balancing the requirements of often-demanding paid employment and other household needs was often difficult and stressful. This was even more difficult where households had children.

### **5.3 Paid Work and Study: Context**

This section examines the contextual issues relating to interviewees' paid work and study. It is important to recognise that some individuals had a clearer career-path than others, whose work histories unfolded in a more ad-hoc fashion. A number of individuals had made significant career changes. Their feelings about this, particularly its

implications for work-life balance and stress, are discussed below. Working patterns varied widely amongst research participants, with a range of implications for the other aspects of their lives and that of others in their households, that are also examined below. Finally, the section concludes with a discussion of issues related to retirement.

### **5.3.1 Defined Career Paths**

Like most coalfield villages, career paths for most local people had been well-defined until the pit closures of the 1980's (see Dennis, Henriques, & Slaughter, 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992). Young men generally entered the mining industry in their teens, and spent their lifetimes within it. For some there were opportunities to progress into skilled, technical and managerial roles. Women had less clear career paths, but major employers in fields such as the garment industry or mail-order catalogues offered secure employment. In some cases, these were tailored around family responsibilities, with either free transport to work, or workplace nurseries provided. Other jobs, notably in the public sector, also offered similar clear career paths with individuals commencing their employment in their teens or twenties, and working for the same employer for the rest of their working lives.

In this study of those interviewed, only three individuals, two of them retired, had this kind of career path. Owen had been a teacher and then a headteacher, and Lorna had been a nurse who then progressed into a clinical role in mental health. Carl, a 44-year

old engineering technician, was the only individual still working for the employer he joined as a school-leaver.

Others, like Terry and John, started their working lives in the armed forces, before doing the same occupational role in a civilian capacity. Abigail had worked in education and training since gaining her degree, but for a variety of employers in different roles. Briony, after gaining a qualification in care work and working in that field in her teens and early twenties, had subsequently worked for a major wholesaler for the previous fifteen years.

### 5.3.2 Ad-Hoc Career Paths

Most interviewees had much more ad-hoc career paths, having changed jobs or spent periods out of the workforce. For example, Ewan faced limited opportunities in Glasgow during the de-industrialisation of the city in the 1980s. Instead of entering conventional employment, he combined travelling and backpacking with gaining temporary work. After a number of years of this, he started work in the motor industry in an administrative role, before going travelling again, where he met his daughter's mother;

*"I was away for about three years... And then I met [his daughter] Camilla's mother (in India), and we weren't together but she got pregnant and we decided to come back here for when she was born..."*

After returning from India, and moving to Yorkshire, he returned to work in the motor trade. Finally, after being made redundant four times over three years, he decided to return to learning, a journey which took him to postgraduate study, and a new and personally rewarding career undertaking research in his subject in his mid-forties.

Others had a less clearly defined career path. Sinead intended to work abroad after a language degree, but at the time of interview was in an operational role in the civil service. Katie had a career in the travel industry, encompassing roles in railways, education and training, and most recently as airline cabin crew. Her husband Mark had started out working in a chicken slaughterhouse, but his intelligence and talent were noticed, and he was transferred into the company's office team, which led to a career in computer programming.

For others, their path has been even more ad-hoc. Carole combined working in a wide variety of part-time roles with bringing up two sons, who were aged 24 and 25 respectively at the time of the research interview. Most of this time she was on her own, after a divorce from their father, a miner, in the late 1980's. Apart from a three-year move to a nearby city between 1981 and 1984, she had lived within two to three miles of the village all her life, and her mother lived nearby. These circumstances, and the lack of family-friendly employment in the local economy, had stopped her sustaining longer-term jobs until relatively recently.

Initially, Carole did laundry and cleaning work in the NHS, until these roles were eliminated by privatisation. Work in mail order warehouses followed and then some

retail jobs. As her sons Luke and Carl grew older, Carole was able to expand her horizons. In this, the key development for her was taking a cleaning job at the local community centre. This, in turn, led to her taking courses and taking on an administrative role. Although she had qualifications and experience, this job was ideal for her as it enabled her to remain in close proximity to her elderly mother to offer care, and to help with looking after her step-grandchildren in the village.

### **5.3.3 Career Change**

For two couples, career change had helped them improve their work-life balance, develop more fulfilling jobs for themselves, and gain greater autonomy and control over their lives. Thomas and Abigail and their three children lived directly opposite Mark and Katie and their daughter, on a ten-year old development of detached homes in the village. Over the past few years the couples had become friends, supporting each other with issues like childcare. The impetus for change came from Thomas and Mark, who were both finding their existing careers stressful and unrewarding. Thomas in particular described his poor health, as a result of a demanding role in wholesale warehouse management.

*“Yeah. It was all about work. And it was like, I couldn’t say no to work. They said, could you work an extra day or could you work longer hours?”*

Instead, he started a small craft-based business at home, and was able to walk with the children to and from school every day. On occasions Thomas collected Mark and Katie's daughter Maisie from school too, looking after her until her parents got home. Like the other favours the couples did for each other, this was unpaid (an approach replicated by other households in this study) but Mark and Katie reciprocated by making occasional gifts of items such as luxury ready-meals.

Mark had also made a similar choice, leaving a role working in software development for a major media company to pursue a new career as a self-employed technician in broadcast media, as well as developing another business undertaking specialist filming for a range of commercial clients. He was very positive about his work

*“I still see it as a hobby, and I don't see it like work. I absolutely love it.”*

Despite difficulties they had with accessing childcare, Katie was very clear that as a couple they were much happier with their lives than before. Both Mark and Katie expressed a strong commitment to making a success of Mark's new media career, as Katie said

*“...at the moment we don't ever want Mark to be turning down work, while he's building his reputation”*

Both couples valued their better work-life balance, which, they believed, had improved things for their households.

### 5.3.4 Working Patterns

The research participants had a wide range of working arrangements, including conventional shift-working, flexible working, home-working and mobile working. Whilst shift-work had positive as well as negative impacts on individuals' lives, in particular for single women interviewees, it forced significant changes in life patterns, and made developing friendships and networks locally difficult. Those with flexible working arrangements were generally positive about them, feeling that they helped balance work and the other parts of their lives. For Terry on the other hand, a mobile role, undertaking technical support across Yorkshire for a cable company, presented significant difficulties in terms of travel and long hours which he sought to minimise.

Shift-working, flexible working and mobile working demands varied amongst respondents. Sinead, who worked as a manager in a public sector control-room, had the most complex shift-patterns of those interviewed - Continental Shifts, with three earlies, starting at 6am in the morning, three late shifts, starting at 2pm in the afternoon, and three rest days. This was followed by three cover shifts where she could be called into work at various times, and finished with three night shifts starting at 10pm in the evening.

Terry's shift-working patterns were also complex, in a business delivering services to customers on a 24-hour, year-round basis. His work patterns had always been difficult and involved night and weekend working, in addition to driving across much of Yorkshire.



He did a week on call every six weeks, which could require him to attend calls in the middle of the night across his territory.

Other respondents also had complex working patterns, although with greater autonomy and control, and longer rest periods. Katie was working as a senior member of airline cabin crew, although on a one-month on, one-month off basis, and her husband Mark also had to work away when he was working on film and television sets. In this, as previously explained, they were helped with childcare by their neighbours Thomas and Abigail, whose working hours were less demanding.

In contrast to other respondents, Carole's flexible working arrangements were very clearly structured around her family responsibilities. Her work was less than five minutes walk from her home, and her manager allowed her to take occasional time off to look after her elderly mother, provided she made up the hours at other times. The corollary was that most of Carole's work was paid at close to the national minimum wage, in contrast to the relatively higher salaries earned by other study participants such as Terry or Sinead.

### **5.3.5 Retirement**

Four retired households were interviewed as part of the research, Owen and Grace, aged 75 and 74 respectively, Betty aged 75, Muriel (66) who lived with her younger husband Kevin who was still working, and Lorna (64) who retired early from her NHS role

because of ill-health. In addition, John, aged 61, recognised that his health might not allow him to work again.

For Owen and Grace, and for Betty, the transition to retirement was a relatively clear process, and for all three their retirement had been busy and fulfilled at the time of interview. In Owen and Grace's case this was because they had chosen to support their own children by caring for their grandchildren. Until recently, Betty had been active within community organisations and cultural projects, as well as looking after a grandson. For all three, this activity was winding down. Owen and Grace's grandchildren were getting older; and Betty's move to the village made it harder to maintain contacts in Leeds where she used to live.

For Muriel, retirement has been more difficult - it was forced on her by physical and mental ill-health, resulting in her effectively being housebound and dependent on her husband and other carers. Lorna retired early from the NHS following two serious illnesses. Subsequently she cared for her father and mother before their deaths. In her interview, she described experiencing loneliness as she was estranged from her only brother, and her son lived in London. John (61) had not formally retired from the workforce, but recognised that he was unable to return to his previous work as a coach driver and courier:

*"It's been a little bit difficult because I've literally worked since I left school, even when I was a single parent, I did part time work to fit in with bringing up my son. So I've always been the breadwinner..."*

John's case typifies a pattern of gradual retreat from the workforce exemplified by Lorna, and observed by the writer in his professional life working in mining communities, where illness and work-related injuries hastened departure from the workforce.

In John's case, the loss of his income had been partly balanced by his wife Karen getting more hours at work. Nevertheless, John was still not comfortable about not working. The family's finances were finely balanced, and depended heavily on tax credits and in-work benefits to make ends meet, and one of John's sons had recently helped him out by buying them a new car. Unlike Lorna, John was also very clear on how he would occupy his time as his life of paid work moved to an end. As an ex-serviceman, he planned to become involved in supporting armed forces veterans, and the families of current service personnel; and would combine this with continuing involvement in the life of his church.

### **5.3.6 Summary**

A small number of mostly retired participants had experienced relatively stable career paths working for one employer in one professional or vocational field, but of the working-age respondents only one was still working with the employer they had joined as a school leaver. Most people had worked for a number of different employers, in different jobs in differing vocational fields, and had not followed a planned or pre-determined career path. This meant that they had had to deploy a variety of strategies

to stay in work, maintain incomes and develop their occupational skills. This reflected changing economic structures locally and nationally, coincidence and serendipity in individuals' personal histories, and individual and collective agency and choice.

Two households had made conscious decisions to reduce stress on male partners by choosing to reduce income and change careers. A key feature of the male partners' new roles was work which was more creative, and which allowed more autonomy and self-direction. Both of these households would have found it difficult to pursue new opportunities were it not for the support they had from each other.

A number of the respondents were directly affected by the twenty-four hour environment within which their employers operated. In these cases the demands of citizens and customers necessitated all year-round operation and availability. Other respondents, however, had greater flexibility and control over their working lives. Respondents who were active in their retirements and maintained extensive social contacts were more positive about their retirement experience. It was also clear that retired individuals could be a critical resource to their families and to community organisations.

## **5.4 Paid Work and Study: Enablers**

A wide range of different structures and mechanisms both helped and hindered respondents undertaking paid work and study. For some individuals, families were very

important sources of support. In some cases, this was a wider family network locally, and in other cases family was effectively defined by who lived within the household, and there was minimal contact with family members elsewhere. Networks were also important for those who had them, particularly academic and professional ones, but also ones based around common interests. Relationships with friends and neighbours were less important than families and employment-based networks in supporting working lives, with some exceptions and these are also discussed.

Having work locally was important for a number of respondents, and the reasons for this are outlined. Mobility, and access to cars, was important to virtually all the respondents, and the issues behind this are also discussed. A number of respondents highlighted where their employers had been supportive at times of difficulty, which had enabled them to stay in work. In some circumstances, flexible working had also been a major enabler of wider household strategies. The place of education and training as an enabler is also discussed, in particular the importance of opportunities respondents had taken up as adults. Whilst a number of the respondents were in professional or technical occupations, two respondents were in specific areas of skills shortage, and this issue is also examined below.

#### **5.4.1 Families**

Whilst historically in mining communities jobs had been obtained through family connections, this was not the case for any of the participants in this study; none of

whom worked in a family business, with a family member, or had secured employment through a family contact. Again, this reflected the nature of their professional and administrative work, where job-application processes were generally open, advertised and competitive; a pattern which is now prevalent across most areas of the labour market - with, for example, all the UK's major supermarkets having moved to online job applications only.

However, families did play an important role in sustaining individuals in employment. Owen and Grace, for example, were absolutely clear that their support with childcare for their grandchildren had helped their children sustain work and pursue their careers; particularly their daughter whose marriage broke up, leaving her as a single parent. For Carole, the fact that she could rely on her older sister with help looking after her mother, particularly with taking her on hospital visits, helped minimise her absences from work. Similarly, Terry and his wife Gillian had made a conscious decision that Gillian would not return to work after their sons were born, and were subsequently diagnosed with autism spectrum disorders. This choice reflected the fact that Terry's earning potential as a network engineer was greater than Gillian's earnings as a nurse.

In other cases, choices were different. When Thomas changed career and dropped his managerial role, Abigail continued in her professional job, and became the family's main earner. This was a deliberate decision, motivated in large part by the stress and ill-health Thomas had experienced in his job, and although they lost the major part of an income of £50,000 per year, they felt that the gains in terms of improved mental health - as well as the benefits of Thomas being at home for childcare - were worthwhile. For

Mark and Katie, the calculation was more complicated. Mark's new working arrangements were complex and demanding, but Katie still felt that the benefits in terms of quality of life were well worth having. In both cases, the decisions were ones which had been made jointly, and which both partners owned.

For other respondents, whilst family support was not critical to working life, it was important in sustaining their homes. Sinead, for example could rely on her mother (who lived in a village five miles away) visiting her home to check it while she was away, in one case minimising the consequences of a major flooding incident. Sinead's mother also helped with identifying suitable tradespeople to help with home repairs and improvements. In another case, Briony relied heavily on her mother for help with DIY and household repairs. Without this support, it would have been much harder for these single women to manage the demands of work and looking after a home.

Carole had a large family network, and she had frequent contact with children and grandchildren living locally, drawing on this wider local network to allow her to work, and to support her mother:

*"I can't do hospital visits with her because I don't drive. Me stepsister does all that because she's fifteen years older than me and she's retired, and she's really good, so she can drive, she more or less sees to that. If she's away somewhere, I have to sorta organise it so that, me mum pays for someone to tek her, because she wain't go on their transport because you have to wait hours for it... She gets*

*carers allowance, so she pays somebody to tek her, and then I'll go with her as an escort."*

Her informal arrangements with the rest of her family were important for Carole in organising care and other activities for her mother. Carole's family network was much larger than that of other interviewees. Between them, she and Alan had seven children, most living within a ten-mile radius. One of her brothers, and her step-sister, lived locally; while her brother, and Alan's eldest son, lived in cities only 20 miles away.

Families were not a mechanism for accessing employment, but they were important in helping sustain employment, as well as enabling other aspects of life such as home maintenance. As discussed earlier, Carole also had a work situation where she had the scope to negotiate some flexibility when she had to look after her mother. This was in stark contrast to couples like Abigail and Thomas, or Katie and Mark, where their work was less flexible and there was infrequent contact with families, even those who lived relatively locally. It also needs to be stressed that whilst Carole benefited from her networks, her support for two of Alan's daughters involved significant emotional labour. This will be discussed in the next chapter.

#### **5.4.2 Networks**

Wider external networks were important in helping some study participants to access employment or business opportunities. For example, Mark's networks were helpful in



gaining work for his business. As well as media work, he traded genre-related memorabilia, and his access to networks in science-fiction helped this. He had also joined a number of local business networking organisations, which had helped secure work undertaking specialist filming for company websites. Finally, his network within the broadcast and film industry was growing rapidly, and as a result he was getting regular work from a growing range of production companies.

Working in his new creative role, Mark had managed to secure employment on film sets within three weeks of starting up, which Katie did not feel was down to any specific networks, either local or national, but reflected innate assets of personality on which he was able to call. As she suggested:

*“It’s like your persona. I think he’s got a really nice - well obviously I’m biased - but he’s got such a nice demeanour about him that I think wherever you go people will always listen to what you’ve got to say. You’ve just got a really lovely way about you. Yeah, you have!”*

Ewan, a mature student, had also used networks in his field, both regional and national, to develop his career. This started when he returned to learning and got part-time administrative work in a community adult education centre in a nearby city. This experience was used to lever further community work opportunities in his subject, and five years on he was still returning to the centre to deliver occasional classes.

At one stage in his degree Ewan had the opportunity to spend a summer working abroad, supported by a bursary, and had to resign from work at the community education centre. Getting a new job on his return proved time-consuming, frustrating and difficult:

*“I spent about six months last year going to interviews and chasing more jobs than I did studying, I think... But after Christmas last year, one of my lecturers said [a statutory organisation in Ewan’s field] want a [field researcher]... They just want someone they can call part-time that’s reliable... You’re ten minutes, fifteen minutes from their office door... So I started building up work from there... And I think I had to take that chance, I know it was painful for six months, for my girlfriend in Wakefield basically funded me for my third year...”*

Ewan drew on his academic and professional networks, as well as his abilities to market and promote himself. However, with a daughter to support and a car to keep on the road, he had to focus on adequately paid opportunities. Many interesting opportunities in his subject are badly paid, or even unpaid, and only open to students or researchers with independent means, and Ewan felt disadvantaged.

Nevertheless, contacts in his field had continued to help Ewan access work, and he believed that his focus on paid opportunities to support his study would help him develop a sustainable career in the field.

*“I finished my degree in the summer, so now I’m doing a Masters part-time. But from the start of this year, I’ve had [subject-related] work non-stop, either from*

*the University or... From [a statutory organisation in Ewan's field]... A couple of other commercial firms... And because of my own research there's a community project..."*

Ewan felt he was surviving and developing a career in a subject in spite of labouring under some disadvantages. The opportunities for students to develop practical experience in his field are often unpaid, a choice which as a parent and a tenant, Ewan could not take. So, whilst Ewan was helped by the bursary, he had to give up other work to take up the opportunity. In practical terms, his most helpful networking was with the contacts described above, who had employed him extensively on fieldwork and contract research. As with Mark, Ewan was able to call on his ability to market himself, as well as resilience derived from life experience.

### 5.4.3 Friends and Neighbours

As discussed above, local friends and neighbours were relatively unimportant for most respondents in accessing employment or continuing education. This reflected a number of processes.

Firstly, even where individuals were friends and neighbours and had businesses of their own, such as Mark and Thomas, their markets were regional and national, and their key business development contacts were either national contacts in broadcast media, or local and regional business-to-business customers (Mark) or customers across the region gained at craft fairs and via the internet (Thomas). Secondly, a significant number of those in employment were incomers to the village, and did not have large local friendship networks, or close relationships with their neighbours. Thirdly, most of those in work were in professional and administrative roles - and none were in employment sectors where local word of mouth or personal recommendations were important in securing work, such as construction or hospitality work.

To a certain extent, Mark and Katie and Thomas and Abigail were an exception to this. This was for two specific reasons. First, Thomas and Abigail supported Mark and Katie with childcare for their daughter, Maisie. Because Mark needed to work away frequently, and Katie also had commitments with her airline every other month, this childcare was critical, and Mark and Katie recognised it as such. The couples had initially got to know each other through the now-closed SureStart facility, and in the unsuccessful campaign

to keep it open. They were in similar circumstances - incomers to the village with no support from their wider families. Second, Mark was able to help Thomas with getting additional work as a film extra to augment the income he received from his craft business, and in turn Thomas helped Mark in his work. However, this was the only relationship between neighbours amongst those interviewed during the study where there was this kind of support.

#### 5.4.4 Local Work

Most of the respondents travelled out of the village for work, in some cases considerable distances, or to multiple locations across the region. Nevertheless, for two of the respondents, Carole and Briony, working close to home was critical. For Carole, as a non-driver, it was very important to have work in the village:

*"Oh god, yeah. The thoughts of me having to finish this job if it does shut or summat like that, I just dread having to get onto a bus and ride for another half and hour forty-five minutes to get to a job..."*

An eventuality of this nature would make looking after her elderly mother impossible, as well as the support she gave to her step-daughter in looking after her step-grandchildren. A similar issue arose for Briony. She worked on an industrial estate a few miles from her home. Though a driver, with her own car, she lacked the confidence to drive on motorways, dual-carriageways or in urban settings. She was clear that if she

lost her current job, she would be severely restricted in the number of potential new employment options she could access. In part, this was explained by the traumatic effects of her involvement in a major motorway accident some years previously.

#### **5.4.5 Cars and Mobility**

Having access to a functioning vehicle was critical to the lives of almost all the research participants. Only one interviewee was not a driver (Carole), and others were in jobs where car-ownership was essential to cope with the demands of shift-work, and working away. In Carole's case matters were complicated by the fact that her husband Alan only had a motorcycle licence. Most of the commuting and work-related driving which individuals did depended on access to motorways and the wider national road network. None of the respondents felt that the limited public transport options in the village could substitute for car-ownership.

Across those interviewed, having one vehicle per driver was the rule rather than the exception, allowing people to manage the demands of commuting, shopping, childcare and other activities. The loss of vehicles could have a significant impact, and most respondents took a low-risk approach and used local garages and main dealerships to repair and maintain cars, other than four respondents who had fully equipped workshops in their homes and for whom vehicle maintenance was part of work or a hobby.

Only four research participants, Alan (Carole's husband, who was a mechanic), Carl, Thomas and David serviced their own vehicles. No-one relied on cash-in-hand repairs in the local informal economy for what they viewed as a critical item, although it was clear to the researcher during fieldwork that repair of cars in garages and driveways was being undertaken by some other local residents. Two factors might explain this. First, changes in vehicle technology have made access to professional electronic diagnostic equipment more important. Second, most of the respondents were in-comers, without access to local family and friendship networks that could have offered access to car maintenance and repair in the informal economy.

#### **5.4.6 The Role of Employers**

A number of interviewees highlighted the positive contribution of their employers in helping them sustain work and employment. Briony had been seriously injured in a road traffic accident, in which a friend had been killed, and others permanently disabled. She was in hospital for some time, and her recovery took a number of months, but her employer (a major national wholesale business) kept her job open and allowed her return to work on a phased basis.

John had a series of serious and life-threatening illnesses which meant that he had to take significant periods of time off work his work as a coach driver for a small local company. In the end he returned to work on reduced duties as a courier and guide, instead of driving. Carl had also been seriously injured and had been unable to work for some months following a motorsports accident, and his employers had been supportive

during his absence and phased his return to work. In part, this could be explained by the critical skills and knowledge which Carl had developed over twenty years working for his employer, and which would have been impossible to replace easily.

Maria, Carole's manager at the community education centre where she worked was supportive of Carole and the caring responsibilities that she had for her elderly mother. Carole reported that whenever she had contacted Maria to ask for time off because of a health issue with her mother, Maria had been happy to let her have it, and work the hours on another occasion. She felt that this was because Maria also had caring responsibilities. Carole also felt that Maria recognised that she would not take unreasonable advantage of this goodwill.

#### **5.4.7 Flexible Working**

Two individuals, Carole and Rosemary, valued their relatively flexible working arrangements. It was important for Carole that she could respond quickly to health and other emergencies relating to her mother. Rosemary was very positive about the flexibility her shift-work allowed her, and had limited family pressures in any case. This was because she rarely saw her grown-up son, who lived with his wife and child near her family, in a commuter town thirty miles north. Instead, her life revolved around her animals, and her choices about where she lived and her working arrangements reflected the fact that she had 10 dogs and cats. She worked nights as an agency nurse, and



although fully-qualified, chose to work as a nursing assistant, as this offered her more flexibility and did not require refresher training:

*“I absolutely love it. (The flexibility) I just wouldn’t want to do anything else because of the lifestyle that it gives me, with the choice of the hours, especially with the animals, you know. If one of them is not well, I just don’t go to work. I work a different night. I take a few days off and then work round it, without having to ask an employer, can I have time off? I love the flexibility of it.”*

#### **5.4.8 Education and Training**

In eleven of the households at least one individual had a degree-level qualification, and in one household both adults had degrees, although only four had taken the conventional route of going straight to higher education after school. Five participants out of the total of twenty-three interviewed had post-graduate qualifications, and one individual had a doctorate. Most of the others interviewed had qualifications of various kinds, usually vocational, with only three individuals having no formal qualifications. This is not reflective of the general population locally: as discussed in Chapter 4, 39% of residents had no qualifications; and only 12% were educated to the equivalent of “A” Level or above.

The routes which individuals had taken to get their qualifications had varied. A number took degrees as mature students, or else achieved degree-level qualifications as part of vocational training. Three of the respondents, Muriel, Frank and Ewan, had taken their degrees in their forties, and Ewan was still studying part-time for a Masters in the subject area which had also become his professional field. In other cases, the courses which individuals had taken linked closely to their work. Owen's Masters degree and Lorna's Doctorate related to their previous careers in education and the NHS, for example, and Terry's degree built on his previous role as a technician in the armed forces, and supported his current role in digital communications. Carl had also qualified to Masters level as part of his work as an engineering technician.

As her sons had got older and became less dependent, Carole had returned to formal work, cleaning at the local community learning centre for a number of years within the hours she was permitted to work while drawing benefits. This had also offered her the opportunity to return to learning, as the courses at the centre were free to participants on benefits. In turn, this had given her the opportunity to undertake administrative work for the first time:

*“Maria (the Centre manager) offered me a job. ....we used to enrol then just in August, so I used to help do the paperwork and enrol people, and then after that there were a job came up in office and she asked me if I wanted job in the office.... So, I've always cleaned, I still clean, I also work in office and I'm still there.”*

As stated previously, for Carole, the fact that she could combine this with caring for her mother and supporting other family members was crucial.

For some interviewees there was a regret that they had not made more of educational opportunities earlier, or a degree of anger at the culture of under-achievement in which they had grown up, with Ewan highlighting his lack of opportunities as a school-leaver in Glasgow.

*“I mean I left school in the 1980's in Glasgow, in the area of highest male unemployment in Europe... I had a couple of exam passes and that was it... I didn't have enough to go to any college or university.”*

The opportunities available to others had also been shaped by recession and economic restructuring in the 1980's, with Carole, Terry and Frank entering the workforce in the 1980's, in an economy devastated by colliery closures and the collapse of manufacturing locally.

#### **5.4.9 Skills Shortages**

Some of the research participants had skills that were critical to their employer, and others that were in shortage across the economy nationally. This had the potential to either guarantee employment opportunities or to place them in a strong bargaining

position. The importance of Carl's skills and knowledge to his employer has already been outlined. He was a major repository of the company's embedded learning, in a technologically advanced and capital-intensive field of work. Losing and not replacing Carl for three months as a result of his accident was a price the employer was willing to pay to retain his skills.

Other respondents also had critical skills of value to employers or potential employers. Gillian, for example was acutely aware that if she were not caring for her sons she could return to work as a nurse, although the need to refresh qualifications was a potential difficulty. Rosemary was also a nurse, and originally qualified to a similar level. Although, as she had lived abroad for some time, had she wanted to work as a fully-qualified nurse she too would have had to refresh qualifications. However, the shortage of experienced staff in the NHS meant that she could earn the income she needed working as a health-care assistant on an agency basis, working at nights in hospitals across the region. She was able to choose when she worked, and because she was working at night she was able to consistently rely on getting work, as well as having days free to look after her animals.

#### **5.4.10 Summary**

Families and family networks were important for some individuals in sustaining them in employment. The support of families - in particular of couples for each other - was vital

in undertaking new ventures or sustaining employment. Where they existed, large family networks could be supportive.

Two of the respondents had developed professional networks across a much wider geography, which in turn helped them secure employment opportunities. The experience of these two respondents showed the value of life-experience and resilience when working in fields characterised by insecure opportunities, as well as the need to continually market themselves to new customers and clients. For a number of other interviewees, social and professional networks beyond the village were vital in securing employment and business opportunities.

Across the research participants, there was very little reliance on neighbours for any kind of support to either access or sustain paid work or employment. Where this reliance occurred, it reflected the lack of other local contacts the individuals had. These individuals were characterised by a change from using locally contained and informal family networks to access and maintain employment, to more individualised approaches, and professional networks extending over a far wider geographical area.

For two respondents the opportunity to work locally was vital. For one of them, not having a driving licence limited her potential employment options. For the other, lacking the confidence to drive on major roads also limited where she could work. Therefore, for respondents in positions like these, it was important to retain local employment opportunities.

For almost all the interviewees car-ownership was a critical element which made living in the village possible. There was no use of the local informal economy or cash-in-hand work for car maintenance or repairs, with most households relying on local garages or main dealers. Therefore, the extent and form of informal economic activity in this mining community was changing as a result of shifts in residential patterns, employment conditions and technology.

A number of individuals reported having employers who were very sympathetic to their problems, and in particular supporting them through ill-health or family illness. This occurred with both private and public sector employers. The three respondents who reported this positive support described a relationship with their employers based on long-term commitment, reciprocity and mutual respect. Employers' attitudes, therefore, were key in supporting individuals in circumstances like these. Two respondents had found flexible working arrangements, which they valued. For one of the respondents, the opportunity to work nights was a positive one, and allowed her to look after pets during the day.

The proportion of individuals with degree-level qualifications amongst the respondents was significantly higher than in the wider local population. For three of the respondents, access to low-cost and free adult education had been crucial in their pursuit of new options and careers. The availability of adult education in a setting close to where they lived had been crucial.

## 5.5 Paid Work and Study: Constraints

This section examines the constraints that affected paid work and study within household strategies. For some of the respondents, childcare was a very significant issue which had a major impact on their working lives, and this is discussed, along with the experience of those for whom it was less of an issue. A number of interviewees reported problems with health, or stress-related issues, as a result of their work, or which impacted on it. This is also discussed, along with the effects of work, particular anti-social working hours, on social isolation. Finally, there is a discussion of the impact of flexible working practices.

### 5.5.1 Childcare

For most of the working households interviewed, childcare was not a significant issue. Ewan, as well as John and Karen, had teenage daughters, but they were capable of looking after themselves. Terry and Gillian had more significant issues with their sons, and Gillian had chosen to give up work to look after their three boys. For this couple, the critical issue was the almost complete absence of any support from elsewhere, which given the boys' autism, imposed heavy demands on them both, and meant they rarely had time together on their own.

Until they made friends with each other, Abigail and Thomas and Mark and Katie had serious problems with arranging childcare. The most obvious example was when Abigail

and Thomas had their third child. With no-one local to call on, and no family members willing to help out, they had depended completely on their childminder, who lived in a village five miles away, to look after the two older children:

*“...when Arthur (their third child) was born, he was born on the Christmas Eve, she was the only person we could give the other two kids to look after... She had the other two from like 10 o’clock in the morning to 1 o’clock in the morning, Christmas Day. She was the only person locally who could do that for us.”*

Thomas and Abigail and Mark and Katie supported each other’s working arrangements, with Mark and Katie recognising that they make more demands from the relationship because of their more complicated working lives. Apart from some work as a film extra, which Mark had helped him secure, Thomas worked mostly at home in his garage-cum-workshop and took on dropping off and picking up children from school for both families. Abigail’s work involved quite a lengthy commute, but she was home in the evenings, and was able to help look after Maisie if Katie and Mark were both away overnight, which happened occasionally.

Mark and Katie’s working lives remained a complex balancing act. Katie worked for a charter airline in a senior cabin-crew role, and Mark’s role also required him to work away from home overnight quite frequently. Managing their working lives was a complex task, although made easier by their friendship with Abigail and Thomas. Asked how a typical week unfolded, Mark was clear that there was not such a thing. Katie expanded on this:



*“They’re all really different, aren’t they? Basically I get my roster for December on 15th November. We sit with our diaries and I say she’ll have to go to breakfast club on that day, can you take her to breakfast club or are you working? When he worked 9 - 5 it was a lot easier... But... we’re only stressed every other month, because I only work every other month. So we just kind of sit with diaries, don’t we?”*

Katie and Mark were both absolutely clear that they could not do what they did without the help of Abigail and Thomas, as like Abigail and Thomas, they had no other support locally.

*“It is, like when he worked nine to five it was quite easy to manage the childcare, cos after-school care and childminders are geared towards people who work nine to five...”*

For both couples, the absence of any support from their wider families was particularly difficult. This experience strongly contrasted with that of Carole, who provided daily support to her step-daughter in looking after her children, or Owen and Grace, who had made significant efforts to support their adult children by helping them with childcare.

## 5.5.2 Health and Stress

A number of the households interviewed experienced high levels of stress, for example Thomas and Abigail, before Thomas made the decision to change careers. Career change, and opting for a job where they had greater autonomy and control over their work patterns, was a positive development for both Thomas, as well as his friend and neighbour Mark. In Thomas's case, a stressful role, working as an assistant manager in a wholesale warehouse for a multinational company, had affected his health, and created high levels of stress. Asked why he had left his job, he said:

*“Health reasons. Having enough of working for long hours and not really seeing the family... It was crazy really...”*

Commuting had been very demanding, especially when Thomas worked in Sheffield, and being able to fulfil parental obligations sometimes depended on conditions on the roads.

*“...the problem that we had particularly when I worked in Sheffield was that I would start maybe five in the morning, I would finish at five in the evening and I got stuck in traffic. I'd been trying to get back to pick up the kids from work, that's what was the problem for Abigail. And it's obviously a lot easier now that I work from home because I can take the kids to school...”*

John's health conditions had forced him into early retirement and to re-evaluate his life, leading to him giving up taking risks with his health:

*“So (I’ve) just got to take notice of what the doctors say, and (what) my family have been saying for some time and just take things a bit steadier.”*

For others, reducing their working hours or opting for less-demanding work was not a viable option. As the father of two autistic sons at that stage, Terry's hospitalisation with lymphodaema in 2010 had caused the family serious problems. He had spent a month in hospital in May of that year, and had then convalesced until September. His then-manager's unsympathetic attitude had been a serious problem.

Terry's and Gillian's replies to a question about how the employer managed the return-to-work process was pointed:

*“Shit.... It were terrible. ....Put it this way, I spent years battling to keep my job.” (Terry)*

*“They come and took your company car off you, didn't they? He'd [Terry] got a vein drain on, sucking out all the crap out.” (Gillian)*

*“I'd paid for car, for private use, [he] turned up. He came by himself. He was supposed to come with two.”(Terry)*

Terry and Gillian felt that his employers put him under pressure unreasonably at times, given his illness. At the time of interview, Terry's management team had changed, with someone he had worked with for twenty years taking charge. He felt this change had given him more control over his working arrangements.

One other respondent, Ewan, reported health problems, although in his case they were solely physical. He had experienced knee problems which prevented him working for a few weeks, and he believed that the NHS locally placed no importance on his need to return to work as quickly as possible, although his self-employed status made it imperative that he earned money.

### **5.5.3 Social Isolation**

Some of the interviewees experienced social isolation in the village, in spite of having relatively safe and secure jobs and lifestyles, because of the sacrifices that had to be made to meet the demands of jobs and employers. Relative isolation made working and commuting lives more difficult, and moving into a small village and taking part in village life could present particular issues for working single women.

An absence of local support was also a factor for other interviewees. Individuals who had support of this nature generally got it from other family members, and not through neighbourhood or community links. For respondents who did not have support, demanding working and commuting patterns were a particular problem.

A number of the households interviewed were experiencing, or had experienced, social isolation in the village. Two couples, Katie and Mark, and Thomas and Abigail, who were all incomers to the village, had experienced this until they got to know each other. For them, without family locally (and also with families who did not support them in practical terms) that absence of support was a major issue. The houses they lived in were developed as a result of local planning policies which sought to diversify tenure patterns, and make the village more sustainable through additional new housing for more affluent commuters. However, this did not factor in the relative isolation of the kind experienced by these two couples which made working and commuting lives more difficult.

Sinead, a single woman in her thirties who had recently moved to the village, also experienced social isolation. Her work required twenty-four hour availability on changing rotas, which made it difficult to keep in contact with friends from university and previous jobs:

*“Working my shift pattern makes having a social life quite hard. I’ve got to be really organised and sometimes all I want to do is actually just sit down for a couple of hours and watch some TV, without having to have my diary out, my calendar out, my phone, messaging people. Are you free this day, are you free that day? Sometimes it feels I’ve got an office job, trying to sort out meetings with people. So it is quite hard.”*

As the only one of her social group who did not work nine-to-five hours, she felt that her need to plan a social life was regarded as odd:

*“It’s quite tricky. I’ve got a calendar. My friends always laugh because there’s E’s, L’s and N’s (earlies, lates, nights) on every day so I know what shift I’m doing and trying to book everything in. It’s quite annoying for my friends as well, because I’ll be like, what are you doing on May 6th? And they’re like, I have no idea, that’s too far ahead. I’m like, well, I’ve got the Saturday off. So I try and book stuff in ahead of time, which just sometimes feels a bit forced, so now I can’t really do anything on a whim so much.”*

It also made developing new networks in the village hard, even with immediate neighbours.

*“Because of the shifts I work and stuff, I don’t see (neighbours), and obviously then it’s been winter, I don’t really see them that much. I’ve not spoke to them next door for a while, but I’ve been in and had a drink, like a cuppa at their house, when I first moved and stuff, and I’ll easily talk to her for half an hour in the garden. I always say hi to the other ones.”*

Her work also stopped her taking part in aspects of village life such as going to the local pub, and limited the time she had to undertake tasks like DIY and decorating her house. It was clear that for Sinead, as with a number of the other research participants such as

Ewan, networks beyond the village are just as important, if not more important, than those within the village.

#### 5.5.4 Flexible Working

Whilst some respondents, notably Rosemary, considered shift working a valuable option that allowed greater choice and flexibility in the rest of their lives, for others it was deeply disruptive. Sinead reported that she struggled with sleep, and that shift working was disruptive for her life.

*“It does mess with me. It’s not great, the shifts. They’re not healthy for you either. Everyone I know puts on weight, sleeping is an issue...”*

Her Continental Shift pattern, where she worked first nights, then days, and was then on standby, was a particular problem, and offered none of the flexibility of Rosemary’s arrangement. It also made planning other aspects of her life more difficult. Terry had to do on-call shifts once every six weeks which he and Gillian found difficult to plan for. He had managed to drop planned night working, as other colleagues were keen to get this premium rate overtime. He explained

*“Yeah, I got out of that... There’s a lot of people who will grab that money because it’s overtime and there’s very little of it now. Whereas I’d rather be in bed, because you’ve still done your full day and then they said, right, you’re*

*going in at midnight. I come home, I've got to get my sleep. The pattern is a bit weird."*

Nevertheless, his working arrangements had an impact on his ability to take part in activities with his sons and also had an impact on other aspects of his health, particularly musculo-skeletal problems that followed his Lymphodaema.

### **5.5.5 Summary**

The interviewees with teenage children reported limited problems with childcare, and relied on their children's relative autonomy and self-reliance. For families with no family support, or estranged from their wider family network, some childcare issues were highly traumatic, particularly finding someone to look after older children during the period when younger siblings were born. Conventional childcare settings with standard hours could not support parents with non-standard working arrangements. For one of the households, their working lives would have been impossible without the support of their neighbours across the street.

Work-related stress had forced a number of respondents to reduce hours or pursue career change. Only through gaining a greater degree of autonomy and control over their working lives were they able to address well-being issues. For one respondent who experienced ill-health, their circumstances forced a gradual withdrawal from the workforce which was tentative and inconclusive, lacking a clear cut-off point. In facing



these problems, NHS primary care was not necessarily geared to helping individuals return to work, and for self-employed individuals delays getting health treatment resulted in a loss of income.

Although social isolation is generally understood as a phenomenon affecting older or vulnerable people, it was also experienced by relatively well-off younger respondents in work. The interviews showed that families were not necessarily close, they did not always support each other, and being part of a family did not prevent social isolation. In addition, work patterns and work demands made it difficult for individuals to sustain existing friendship networks that were valuable to them.

Whilst one interviewee viewed shift working in positive terms, another was very specific about the detrimental effect of continental shift patterns on sleep patterns and general health and another interviewee had made the positive choice to forgo the extra income from planned overtime for the benefit of his health. Flexible working, therefore, had positive and negative impacts, and these depended on the circumstances of the households.

## **5.6 Conclusions**

This chapter has discussed the place of paid work in household strategies. A number of key conclusions arise from the interviews. Most of the respondents of working-age were in paid employment, with all of these individuals working on the books in legitimate

formalised employment<sup>37</sup>. Off-the-books cash-in-hand working was not part of any household's work strategy.

## **Context**

There are a number of key contextual issues which had a bearing on household work strategies; and some issues which were not identified as priorities by respondents within the interviews, but which might reasonably have been expected in research with a focus on working lives. Only one respondent, for example, expressed an interest in working more hours, and only one was actively looking for promotion with their employer. None of the research participants was actively looking to move employers. It was clear that most of the respondents were broadly content with the place of paid work and study within their lives, or else were taking steps to reduce and not increase its impact. It also needs to be noted that the nature of the social and economic changes which affected Ballyhenry as a village were also shaping a widening range of household strategies, in which traditional working patterns and support from locally-based family and friendship networks were not a significant element.

## **Enablers**

Family members, or local friends and neighbours, were not important in securing jobs. In some cases wider professional, interest-based or academic networks were helpful. However, families did help respondents maintain work through support with childcare,

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<sup>37</sup>

Carole's husband Alan is paid in cash, but this reflects his employers archaic office systems.

and in one case where there was no family support neighbours had provided such support; and for a number of people the flexible employment options they had were viewed positively by those who had them. Interviewees had both planned and ad-hoc career paths, and only one respondent who was currently working had been with the same employer since leaving school. A number of respondents had chosen to change careers in order to achieve greater personal fulfilment, as well as better work-life balance. Almost all the respondents had educational qualifications, the majority to degree level. A number of individuals had taken advantage of free and low-cost adult education to develop their skills and employability.

### **Constraints**

There were a variety of full-time and part-time working patterns, some of which were reported as having a negative impact on health and well-being. Having outlined the importance of work in respondents' household strategies, the following chapter examines the question of care. This was an issue which dominated many of the interviews, and that also shaped the scope to explore other less pressing and immediate activities within household strategies.

## 6.0 Care in Household Strategies

### 6.1 Introduction

*“We’ve brought them up. We’ve done it. We don’t have to go to you and say, thank you very much for your help. We haven’t had it. At the end of the day, we’ve done it our way and they’re doing bloody marvellous, as far as we’re concerned. And we know they’re going to do well. They’ll work, they’re going to get good jobs, even with the issues they’re going to have...” Terry, 48*

This quotation from Terry, the father of three autistic sons, reflected the hard work that he and his wife Gillian had put in with their boys, with no support from their wider families. They recognised that their sons were always going to have problems because of their conditions, but they felt positive about their future. Nevertheless caring for their sons continued to be the central part of their household strategy. This chapter examines the place of care in household strategies. It has three key purposes

- To describe the **context** of care in the lives of the households, and its impact.
- To identify the **enablers** which households have to help them manage the demands of care, in particular the role of networks outside the household.

- To identify the constraints which households experience in balancing care and other demands, and the presence or absence of support from family members and others.

## 6.2 Background

Much of the research on the informal economy and household work strategies to date has focused on how physical tasks are performed, and the division of labour within households. Although the interview questions probed these issues, and respondents were asked both about how common household tasks were accomplished, and who did them, the open nature of the interview schedule allowed participants to express what had weight and importance within their own household strategies.

This was much less likely to be the domestic repairs or minor building work described in previous research. Instead, most interviewees either did these tasks themselves, or paid tradespeople in the conventional economy. In most of the discussions it was clear that different aspects of the issue of care were much more important in individuals' thinking - this could be care for children, care for other adults, or care for older people. This chapter examines the impact of caring for others, and being cared for, on the lives of individuals and households. Of the seventeen households, individuals in fourteen of them were involved in caring for another person. In two of the three other households, individuals were involved in caring for animals.

Many households were caring for children and grandchildren, or elderly parents. The need to care for neighbours was less of an issue, although one participant had helped her neighbour during a period of unemployment by sharing meals and helping with food for animals.

### **6.3 Context**

In examining the context within which households undertook and managed care, this section draws out a series of key themes that emerged from the interviews. From discussions with research participants it was clear that financial motivations, in particular cash-in-hand payments, were not a factor in decisions to become involved in caring for others. For this reason issues relating to choice and motivation were probed, and are examined in this section. Much of the literature discussed in Chapter 2 highlights the roles of grandparents and extended families in providing care and this was also discussed with respondents (Gray, 2005; McDowell, Ray, Perrons, Fagan, & Ward, 2005; Ward, Fagan, McDowell, Perrons, & Ray, 2007; Wheelock & Jones, 2002). For households with teenage children, whilst some reported less pressure to organise childcare, the costs of after-school and extra-curricular activities were an issue. The place of care for pets and other animals in household strategies has not been substantively examined in previous research, but was a significant issue for a number of the interviewees. Finally, the relative lack of importance of neighbours in most respondents' care strategies is described.

### 6.3.1 Choice and Motivation

The research participants involved in caring for other people had varying degrees of personal agency in the decision to become involved in such care. For parents, there had been a degree of agency involved in the decision to have children, but what happened thereafter was to a large extent determined by the needs and development of the child. For two of the households, that had involved coming to terms rapidly with the unexpected demands of children on the autism spectrum. For other parents, such as Mark and Katie, and Thomas and Abigail, it was clear that the commitment involved in bringing up children without any outside support was significant.

Similarly, those who had looked after older people, or currently looked after them, had not made an entirely voluntary or explicit choice to look after elderly parents. For both Lorna, who had looked after her parents before they died, or Frank who was looking after his mother, there was a sense of duty and obligation. Frank saw looking after his mother as returning the care and support she had shown for him over the years. For Lorna, it was also a focus for her efforts after she had had to give up her work because of illness.

Across the seventeen interviews, there were four occasions in which it was identified that cash or gifts had changed hands in return for help with care. Abigail and Thomas had paid a childminder to look after their children in previous years. This was on a standard commercial basis. Lorna highlighted that when her son was younger, she had

paid a friend to look after him on a cash-in-hand basis. Carole stated that her mother paid friends to drive her to hospital and on social outings when Carole's sister was not available. Mark and Katie felt acutely aware of how lucky they were for Thomas and Abigail's support with childcare. They gave them items like luxury ready-meals and wine as gifts to show this appreciation. No other transfers of this nature took place, and it was clear that the over-riding motivations for caring for others were duty and altruism.

As Owen stated when asked why he and Grace had helped so much with caring for their grandchildren over the years:

*“There doesn't have to be a reason why we're doing this... We are very very family orientated.”*

### **6.3.2 Grandparents and Extended Families**

The place of grandparents in caring for grandchildren varied considerably between households. Although Jennifer and Jordan received limited direct help from their families with their severely autistic daughter Carla, their older daughter Lucy lived with her grandmother most of the week. They valued this as it helped to minimise disruption to her sleep and allowed her to concentrate on school-work, which Jennifer and Jordan viewed as important.



In other cases, grandparents made similarly significant commitments of time and effort to look after their grandchildren. Owen (75) and Grace (74) are an example of this. After retirement (Owen had been a headteacher, and Grace an NHS administrator) they actively supported their children with childcare, as well as looking after Grace's mother whilst she was still alive.

Mark and Katie and Abigail and Thomas recognised that their circumstances were different to those of many local people they knew. As Katie said:

*“There is a lot of people like [another neighbour] whose whole family, she's grown up here, and a lot of parents all went to that school and stuff... They've got parents who live in the village, but even so, there's a lot of parents [and grandparents] who don't live in the village, who still give more support than us mums who still come on school run [get]”*

Both couples recognised that the fact that they were incomers, without close family links, did not give them access to this level of support. Extensive, close-knit and long-standing local families were also discussed by other respondents, and in the experience of the author are widespread in this village and other nearby communities.

For example, Carole had an extensive family network in the locality, or within easy reach. One of the individuals that she could depend on for lifts for her mother was one of her step-daughters' partners. Her sister helped her with other aspects of her mother's care.

The focus in the interview with Owen and Grace was on their support for their children through the childcare they provided for grandchildren and great-grandchildren. With Thomas and Abigail and Mark and Katie, the lack of support they received from their parents and wider families with childcare was keenly felt. The interview with Carole highlighted a different area of care, the emotional and practical support that she and her husband Alan provided to his two daughters from his previous marriage.

Both Jenny (26) and Carlie (25) made significant demands of Carole and Alan. As Carole said:

*“Carlie and Jenny... If they don't ring Alan at least ten times a day... That's normal for 'em... They're always on the phone. Carlie'll phone me - "What do I do about this?" and "What do you think about this?" and as long as I can help, if I can help, I will and I usually can, cos it's summat to with "You know if I'm mekkin so-and-so, what do I do?" You know what I mean?”*

Both daughters were adults and living independently, in Carlie's case in the village with her partner and their two children. However, Carole saw Carlie, her partner and her children on a daily basis, and she was happy to help and advise Carlie. This had included showing Carlie the basics of household management that she had missed out on learning because of her mother's illness and death. Carlie valued that help and advice. In Jenny's case the relationship was more complicated, and had focussed on trying to

support her and give her stability to deal with a history of heavy drinking and violent and anti-social behaviour.

### **6.3.3 Children's Activities**

Previous sections have highlighted the roles of childminders, grandparents and neighbours in looking after younger children. Four of the households had older children attending high school. Jennifer and Jordan's elder daughter, Lucy (16) lived with her grandmother during the week. Terry and Gillian's eldest son, Callum, was attending High School, but although he was academically able he had difficulty with practical issues such as travelling to school because of the nature of his autism-spectrum disorder. After he lost a number of bus passes, Gillian had to start driving him to school again, and it was clear that he would continue to have difficulties with developing the skills to function as independently as his peers.

For two respondents, however, as their children had got older, they were increasingly able to function independently, travelling to school, taking part in out-of-school activities and making themselves meals when they returned from school. Ewan, the mature student, and John and Karen, a married couple, both had thirteen year-old daughters attending the same denominational high-school in a neighbouring city. In Ewan's case, his daughter Camilla lived with him part of the week, and part of the week with her mother, whose home was near the school. Ewan felt that his daughter generally

had a mature and sensible attitude, was capable of looking after herself, and apart from issues regarding the tidiness of her room, their relationship was harmonious. Similarly, John and Karen had a good relationship with their daughter Aoife.

Instead, the key issue for them both were the costs and burdens which participating fully in school placed on their limited resources. As Camilla's mother was listed as her primary carer, Ewan received no help towards the cost of bus-fares. School meals were also an issue:

*"It's not like school dinners are a pound any more. They're like airport cafeterias... They just sort of encourage them to spend when they're there and stuff, so... I mean, school dinners and bus fares a week's about thirty-five pounds or something... I could wipe out half of that by not having to put her on the bus each day and living in the city, it would be a bit easier to be fair..."*

Supporting extra-curricular activities was also a problem, as both Camilla and Aoife were involved in after-school activities, and Aoife played with a local brass band. Although these cost extra money, which neither family found easy to afford, they were willing to make the necessary sacrifices. As both households were on low incomes, this presented them with some problems. As John said:

*"Aoife is a teenage girl, has been a teenage girl for a couple of years, even though she's just 13. She's very bright and as a consequence of that, I don't know*

*if demanding is the right word, but because she is so bright, she needs to be kept occupied.”*

### **6.3.4 Pets and Animals**

Caring for pets was a significant issue for a number of households, and in one case (Rosemary's) her household strategy was focussed on care for her animals. She lived on her own, had one son whom she saw rarely, and limited contacts with other relatives. Her priority was the ten animals, mostly dogs and cats, which she looked after, and had brought back with her from abroad.

In a programme of interviews which the researcher expected to reveal information on poverty, work and getting by, the degree to which animals dominated this respondent's life was completely unexpected. A number of other respondents also highlighted the importance of looking after animals in their lives, however. These included Terry and Gillian, who had dogs, as well as a horse stabled locally on a DIY livery basis; Briony, a single woman living on her own, who had a dog; Carole, who had a cat, and chickens on an allotment; and Lorna, who looked after a dog which lived on her brother's farm. Lorna also owned sheep which she kept on a farm in another county, and was keen to involve herself in campaigning for better standards of animal welfare in slaughterhouses. A number of the people who owned dogs, notably Briony and Rosemary, reported that they had met local people, and made new acquaintances, as a result of dog-walking.

### 6.3.5 Neighbours

Support with care issues from neighbours was not reported in most of the household interviews which took place, with in most cases, neighbourly mutual help limited to favours such as taking in parcels. Except in the case of Thomas and Abigail, and Mark and Katie, none of the interviewees was involved in any aspect of care for a neighbour's children or elderly relatives.

Carole reported that she helped a neighbour occasionally with small amounts of money when they were short, as previous loans had always been repaid, but otherwise the only respondent who actively helped a neighbour on a regular basis was Rosemary. When her neighbour was unemployed for a period, she cooked meals for him and helped him with food for his animals. The relationship was mutually supportive, as he had also helped her with repairs and upgrades to domestic appliances. For those who had lived in the area for some time, however, most of the support they had with care-related issues was from within their own families. This applied for example in relation to Frank and his care for his mother; Lorna and the care that she had given her parents; or the support which Briony described her mother giving to other relatives.

### 6.3.6 Summary

For the respondents who were caring for others, this was not necessarily a positive choice. Their decision to do so took place within a political and social context which limited individual agency. Across all the interviews financial or other rewards received for support with care were either minimal, or of purely tokenistic value. For all the respondents, the over-riding motivations for helping with care were either altruism or a sense of duty.

There were a variety of degrees of help from grandparents and extended families with care. One set of respondents, although they were not directly supported with care for their disabled daughter, were supported through care for their other daughter, allowing her to progress at school. Another set of respondents had given their three children significant support with care for their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Some incomers to the village perceived that local people had large family networks which could support them with care. In the experience of one respondent this was the case. Support was also given to adult family members facing other problems, such as parenting, or their own anti-social behaviour.

In three households parents reported that their teenage children were developing independence and self-management skills, but the one high-school student on the autism spectrum was having difficulty with this adjustment. In two of the households,

where children were living at home but taking part in extra-curricular activities, the costs associated with these, and with school, were causing some problems.

Care for animals was significant in the household strategies of a number of the respondents. Six households had at least one domestic pet or animal, and for those households who owned them, activities such as dog-walking and looking after their animals were a key focus of their household strategies. A number of these respondents reported that dog-walking had helped them make new acquaintances in the village.

It was clear that where caring for a family member was an issue, relationships with other family members were usually much more significant than those with neighbours. The only cases where this did not apply were where close family networks were absent.

## **6.4 Enablers**

This section identifies the major enablers of respondents caring strategies, including the support from the local Council and social landlords. The role of volunteering in the community is also discussed, and the critical place of family support for carers, where it was given. The altruism which motivated caring is also discussed, as well as the importance of having time to give. Further factors which came out as enablers of care were respondents' locations, both within the village and within wider geographies, as well as their mobility, with access to cars being especially crucial. The importance of having access to finance, to pay for cars and fuel, is also identified. This was a key



enabler for one set of respondents in supporting their family. Finally, the role of information and communications technologies in helping autistic children access the wider world is discussed.

#### **6.4.1 Interactions With The Local State**

Respondents had a range of interactions with the local state, in particular Wakefield Council and Wakefield District Housing (WDH), the major social landlord in the area. Frank's mother's flat was rented from WDH, who had undertaken a range of improvements to make her life easier and safer. These were complete when he moved in, so between him and his sister, it was relatively easy to address their mother's care needs.

*“She’s had the wet room shower put in, about seven or eight months ago, because my sister were helping her with the bath, but she just couldn’t manage bath anymore. We had adaptations but she couldn’t physically get into the bath very well, so we applied for that and they passed it almost immediately. Said, yeah, you can have it. There’s little bits and bobs. She’s had the handles put on the doors outside, but they don’t really count anymore because she doesn’t go out under her own steam They’ve put the ramp in for her so we can get wheelchair out there. We have a ramp that goes, like a portable ramp that goes in it. So yeah, she’s had quite a lot done to the flat to help.”*

This reflected a wider commitment by their landlord to support older people at home with investment, as a part of active investment in communities.

For others, care needs were much more complex, and the help they needed was less easy to find. Terry and Gillian, and Jennifer and Jordan, both with children on the autism spectrum, had difficult issues to deal with on a daily basis. Initially, they both received quite a lot of assistance from various agencies, but as time went on, through experience, both families developed their own expertise in looking after their children. As Jennifer said:

*“It got to where the child psychologist says, there’s nothing more I can teach you, she says. It’s come to the point where you’re telling me your strategies and I’m using them to pass on to other families that I’m dealing with. So she... She discharged her. At the minute, we’ve got speech and language, but most of these see her in school, because she’s at a special needs school, you see.”*

Jennifer in particular recognised that she had developed a real expertise in looking after and managing Carla, and that additional insights available from statutory services were limited.

*“When she first got diagnosed, everything were... there were everybody knocking on the door wanting to help, but they go off the book, don’t they? So once they’ve done everything in the book, there’s nothing else they can do for you.”*

In the discussions with both Jennifer and Jordan and Gillian and Terry it was clear that looking after their children was a daily journey of discovery, and often a difficult one.

## 6.4.2 Community

In virtually all the cases the family or the household was the key focus of caring activity. Thomas and Abigail, and Mark and Katie were the only respondents to rely on support from outside their families for childcare, fundamentally because they did not have families they could rely on. Of all the respondents, they had also made the most conscious efforts to become involved in aspects of village life. They had helped campaign against the closure of the local SureStart Centre, which both couples had used when their children were younger. Katie had also involved herself in other aspects of village life, helped in part by her working arrangements, which allowed her to work one month on, one month off:

*“I definitely feel part of the community for sure... Definitely, but only since I had Maisie, and only because I put myself out there. Before I had Maisie, we didn't know anybody, did we? But then when I had Maisie I went up to the children's centre with my baby and went "What shall I do now?" And I met a lot of people up there who were absolutely brilliant, and we've kind of gone to Nursery together, and we've gone to Year One together and we've kinda... That's how I've got to know people, and now I think some people know that I'm a Responder (Katie volunteers to act as a first responder for local people experiencing cardiac emergencies) here... Maybe not many, but (some)”*

The fact that Katie felt that she had to ‘put myself out there’ showed a conscious effort to make new contacts and build new friendships, which had started to pay some dividends, with Katie recognising that there were one or two other people she could turn to in an emergency as well as Thomas and Abigail. Developing these networks and friendships was in part predicated on Katie having the time and the social and practical skills to make it happen.

### **6.4.3 Family Support for Carers**

Whilst a number of households had very little support from their wider family networks, in some cases the opposite was the case, and as a result the task of caring was made easier. One example has already been outlined. Carole was able to call on her sister, as well as other family members such as her step-daughter Carlie’s partner Jason, for help with taking her elderly mother to hospital appointments and social engagements.

Carole’s burden of care with her mother was less than that experienced by Frank, who lived with his mother as her full-time carer. For Frank, this was made easier by support from his sister and brother. His much-older brother, although not able to commit significant time to care and support, visited his mother frequently which took some pressure off Frank. More importantly, Frank’s sister also visited regularly to help her mother with bathing and personal care. Although Frank was an experienced care worker, he had reservations about taking responsibility for that:

*“I’ve done personal care in my job but for guys. As daft as it sounds, it’s easier when it’s a guy, because you can laugh about it and joke about it and stuff, but yeah, it’s difficult when it’s a male looking after a lady and vice versa probably.”*

Frank valued his sister’s support for other reasons:

*“It’s all the time really. I do get breaks and stuff. My sister’s really good. Like I’ve got a lot of friends back at home and I’ve reconnected with a lot of people, so I do have nights out, once or twice a week, if I can fit it in. So my sister will come and look after Mum that evening and make her supper and get her ready for bed. My mum will go to bed. She’s okay once she’s in bed. She’s got a commode in bedroom that she uses and she’s fine using that, because she fell going to the toilet. So we said, no more going to the toilet, you’ll have to have a commode. So she does stay on her own, when that’s the case, overnight, and then my sister comes the next morning and gets her up the next morning, if I’m out sort of thing. So I do get my breaks. I probably, to be honest, I don’t get as many breaks as I’d like, but I know what I’ve signed up for and I can’t go out every day and see my friends.”*

This is a strong contrast with the experience of people like Terry and Gillian, or Jennifer and Jordan, who got very little relief from their caring responsibilities (although Jennifer and Jordan got some limited respite care through the local authority).

#### 6.4.4 Altruism

Some of the literature highlights gift-exchange and the exchange of favours as a way of recognising value when family members or friends help each other out (Williams, 2004; Williams, 2008; Williams & Windebank, 2006). The potential use of this, or payment on a cash-in-hand basis, were explored during the interviews. Apart from Carole's cash payments to people who gave her mother lifts, and Lorna's payments to a friend for childminding when her son was young, there were no cash payments. Mark and Katie bought Thomas and Abigail gifts in return for looking after their daughter, but the most striking feature of most of these relationships and transactions was that no financial or material reward was given, received or expected by anyone. Respondents who supported others with care did so because they felt it was the right thing to do, and felt that it was part of their family responsibilities.

Carole took it for granted that this kind of caring activity was part and parcel of having a family, and her motivations were altruistic. For Owen and Grace, the motivation for looking after grand-children and great-grandchildren was the same:

*“We get pleasure from having them. I was ill over Christmas with this bad cough and Henry and Elizabeth (Caroline's children) came over to see me and brought me flowers. We don't get paid for doing this. We just do it ..... and we see our children regularly.”*

In fact, Owen and Grace were in very frequent contact with their children, speaking to them generally every day. Asked to reflect on the importance of their support for their children, they recognised that in Caroline's case, their support had definitely been the difference between her being able to work and not. Owen and Grace recognised that they were well-off, with healthy occupational pensions in addition to their state pensions, and the fact that they were both drivers gave them a degree of freedom to support their children that other families might not have. This altruistic motivation was shared by the other households interviewed.

Like Lorna, Frank had effectively shifted from waged employment caring for others to working as his mother's full-time carer. Frank saw this primarily in terms of an obligation to his mother, who had supported him through life-changing decisions and events, that he was happy to fulfil:

*“My thought process at the moment is Mum's been a really good mum and she's looked after us really well. She's been a really, really good mum and she's supported me through a lot. She's supported me through my coming out and sort of telling everybody about my sexuality. She's supported me through my leg, and everything, she's always been there whatever sort of thing. So now, in my eyes, it's my turn to look after her for as long as she needs me more.”*

To summarise, financial or material motivations were not significant for any of the respondents in their decisions to care for others. In fact, for most of the respondents, their decision to care for others was motivated by duty, altruism or both.



### 6.4.5 Time

For some of the households, greater free time, and reduced work pressures, facilitated more parental involvement in care. For John, one positive aspect of not being able to do his job because of ill-health was that he could spend more time with his daughter, Aoife. He felt he was able to be more supportive:

*“...she’s said that she’s seen a massive difference in me, since I’ve been at home and she said, to be honest, Dad, it’s for the better. She said, I’m not anywhere near as snappy. I’m a lot more tolerant of some of the things she gets up to and so on.”*

This was also the case for Abigail and Thomas, and their friends Mark and Katie. As noted already, their friendship revolved significantly around childcare, for although Abigail and Thomas’s children were getting older and were able to look after themselves, Katie and Mark’s daughter Maisie had only started school relatively recently. Decisions by both Mark and Thomas to change careers were making things easier, and Abigail highlighted that whereas a few years previously they had struggled to survive from day to day, they could now focus on questions of balancing childcare and work with Thomas’s new flexibility. As Thomas said:

*“The getting-by has changed since I gave up working full-time. Because obviously the time issue is not an issue anymore...”*

The fact that Thomas had left his previous job reduced the pressure on them as a couple, and also meant that there was usually someone at home in the house opposite to help out Katie and Mark if they had an issue with looking after Maisie.

#### **6.4.6 Location and Mobility**

The village was relatively isolated, with limited public transport links, and as already highlighted in the previous chapter, all the households apart from Carole's had at least one car. Carole's reliance on other people to drive her mother has already been outlined. The physical layout of the village, with easy access on foot across the village, also made it easier for her get to her mother and daughter-in-law to help them with tasks and support. However, it would have been much harder for Carole to have done this if she had lived further away, even in one of the villages a few miles away.

At the same time, the village also had relatively easy access to both the A1 and M1 motorways, and for Grace and Owen this had made their caring responsibilities slightly easier. When Grace retired, she was actively involved in supporting her mother, who lived in an East Midlands mining town over thirty miles south, as well as her own children who were spread across Yorkshire, with the furthest away being her daughter Caroline, who lived in a market town fifty miles north.

This involved Grace spending part of the week away from home, first with her mother in the East Midlands, then with her daughter in North Yorkshire. She described a gruelling routine:

*“I used to go on a Wednesday night and this was roughly once a month. I’d been down to see mum at [East Midlands town], got home with Owen and got in the car and drove to [North Yorkshire Market town], and I was there till Friday. And this was once every 4 to 5 weeks, something like that, depending on Caroline’s shifts...*

*I did it because otherwise they couldn’t get anyone to take them to school.”*

Being able to do this was predicated on four things - car ownership, time, confidence as a driver, and having the money for fuel and running costs. Although the respondents were virtually all car owners, as detailed previously, time, confidence and financial resources could not necessarily be taken for granted.

### **6.4.7 Financial Support**

From the household interviews, it was clear that there was not necessarily a link between a household’s income and whether they were able to commit to caring for others. However, all those who cared for others had a range of resources which helped them do it, and as stated previously, Owen and Grace would not have been able to

support their children in the way that they had done, were it not for the fact that they were retired with good public-sector pensions.

Carole, on the other hand, had only some low-paid employment to sustain her, and her husband Alan was on a low wage, but both were able to support their children (including with some financial support). In addition, their outgoings as a couple were limited, as they were buying their house at a discounted rate through Right-To-Buy. Jordan and Jennifer only had access to Carers Allowance and other benefits, but the fact that they had a secure social tenancy, with minimal additional housing costs beyond those covered by Housing Benefit, meant that they were able to make ends meet, and were also able to use a car funded through the Mobility Component of their Disability Living Allowance. Frank also had access to Carers Allowance as a result of looking after his mother on a full-time basis.

#### **6.4.8 Technology**

For both the families with children on the autism spectrum, communication and understanding presented difficulties. Terry and Gillian's sons had all developed language skills, and attended mainstream schools, but still found interaction with teachers and peers difficult, and all three boys had problems because of the challenges their behaviour sometimes presented. However, all three boys had developed high-level ICT skills for their age, with their eldest son, Callum, already making pocket-money sums

from writing apps and programs for gaming. For all three boys, their computers were a key way in which they interact with the world.

Carla had severe problems with communication, was largely non-verbal, and was learning to communicate using Makaton. She was able, however, to use and interact with a tablet; and this was an important part of her daily activities. The problem for Jennifer and Jordan was limiting her use of her tablet, as her erratic and often non-existent sleep patterns meant that she would use her tablet for very lengthy periods of time, and resisted having it taken away from her.

#### **6.4.9 Summary**

It was clear that relatively simple improvements and modifications could make the physical tasks of care much easier for families to deliver within homes. However, other problems were more intractable. The responsibility for these fell back on families, with the local state undertaking a limited role.

Other sections have already highlighted the lack of community involvement amongst respondents, this section shows that only two couples relied on individuals outside their families for support with care. It was clear that for newcomers, becoming accepted and developing trusting and practically supportive relationships in the village took time and conscious effort.

Carers valued the support that they had from other family members, when it was offered. Even for a carer with professional training, the issues involved with caring for an elderly parent, especially personal care for someone of the opposite sex, could be difficult. Wider family support for most carers was very limited. Car ownership was important for some carers, especially those with dispersed families. Where male partners had reduced their work commitments outside the home, or changed their working arrangements, they had been able to commit more time to childcare.

There was no clear linkage between a household's access to finance and its willingness (or ability) to support others with care. However, access to certain resources including transport and low-cost housing made committing to caring for others easier. In different ways, information and communications technologies were a different way in which these children on the autism spectrum could interact with the world on their own terms. As such, access to them was an important enabler for their families in helping them express themselves and develop skills.

## **6.5 Constraints**

This section looks at the constraints which made it more difficult for individuals to organise and provide care for household members and relatives. A number of research participants discussed this at length in interviews, and brought up a range of different aspects of this topic. In some cases, some of the issues raised have only had limited

consideration in academic literature previously, and the discussions are reported at length for this reason.

The section starts with an examination of how care dominated the lives of some of the respondents. For a number of respondents the effective absence of wider family support with caring responsibilities was also a factor, and this is considered. In one family, caring responsibilities were further complicated by the differing norms and rules which had developed in the two partners' families before their marriage. Caring placed significant practical demands on households, and some of these are outlined. There was also an impact on work, with caring commitments restricting the abilities of some respondents to take up paid employment. Finally, the impacts of bereavement on one family, and of looking after ten animals on another respondent are discussed.

### **6.5.1 Care Dominating Lives**

For those research participants involved, caring for children with severe disabilities was very demanding, and involved not just physical presence and support, but constant emotional labour and a total preoccupation with the children. Whilst others had chosen to take on caring for elderly parents, for Terry and Gillian, and Jordan and Jennifer, no choice was involved in taking on the care of their disabled children.

For both couples, this completely dominated their lives. Neither couple got any help from family members locally. In Terry and Gillian's case family members didn't want to

help, and in Jennifer and Jordan's case, their daughter Carla's needs were so complex that their assessment was that no-one else could handle them, other than the specialist respite carers to whom they have occasional access.

There were other complications in managing Carla. She started menstruating at five, and at the time of interview, Jennifer was negotiating with doctors to get her a contraceptive injection to manage her periods, which is not currently approved for children of her age and may have risks.

For both families, even social activities needed to be planned like a military operation, as Gillian said:

*"You've got one screaming because they didn't want socks on. Other one screaming because he didn't want to leave his computer...."*

*By the time you get there, they settle, but then you'll have Joe saying can we go now, halfway through the film. Even getting them dressed, they've got issues. Thomas will only wear long-sleeved tops. Joe wouldn't wear tight trousers. He wouldn't wear socks. He wears socks for school but the minute he gets in that car, he whips them off again. There's about three pairs of socks in foot well.*

*And then he'll come in... He'll lay on the floor and he will literally scream and scream, and I have to take his clothes off for him and his shoes... I don't think if*



*somebody came in and tried what we did, I think they'd just have a nervous breakdown. But we've done it all our... and it's just normal, isn't it?"*

Jennifer reported similar problems when taking Carla to McDonald's.

The physical and emotional demands that caring of this nature placed on the parents were considerable. Unlike Carla, all three of Terry and Gillian's sons were in mainstream schools, but maintaining this was fraught with difficulties:

*"Callum used to get into trouble at school. He were hacking into computer systems and getting into head teacher's records. He nearly got expelled from primary school... And we have the same problem with senior school, because he hacked their system as well. Now, he hasn't been expelled. What they are concerned about, they know they've got a genius on their hands. He's got a tutor every two weeks, for computing, and he lets him get on with it. He's already wrote a programme, an app for the mobile phone."*

Callum's parents admitted that they struggled to keep up with what he was doing, and he spent lengthy periods on his computer at home.

At the time of the interview, the latest events had been unexpected deliveries of crisps and minerals from Amazon Pantry, which it transpired Callum had paid for with earnings from writing and selling programmes for an online gaming platform. However, his

parents felt that school was supportive of Callum, and hoped that some of their problems with Thomas would become less severe when he moved to a new high school.

### 6.5.2 The Absence of Family

Many of the households experienced the absence of family - physically and emotionally. Abigail and Thomas's experiences, and that of their neighbours Mark and Katie, highlighted the problems families faced with childcare when they had no access to family networks. Both couples felt that, in what they perceived to be a very close-knit community, where many families had access to parents, grandparents and other relatives, they laboured under a disadvantage. Resentment was a real issue. Katie, who had older brothers and sisters for whom she baby-sat when she was younger, felt that her needs were not recognised:

*"I've got two sisters and a brother, and they've got two children each, so all of my Saturday nights when I was a kid were spent babysitting for one or the other and I used to take them out on't bus... I didn't begrudge it, I loved doing it... I was quite an active Auntie... But then because I was a lot older when I had my child - they all had their children in their twenties - and I was nearly forty when I had Maisie, no-one ever says 'Oh, can I take her out?' ....Even my nieces - so my nieces are grown-up now, like 26, 23 - they never say "Oh, do you want us to have Maisie?"*

Mark felt the frustration with his parents as well:

*“I mean, my parents would never ring up like you said. They've got a caravan at Cleethorpes. They'd never say “Oh, we'll take Maisie.” And I think some of that's mainly because, like I said, my mum, my step-mum's never had children, so she's not maternal. She's never had that instinct, and me father's too, he can't walk anywhere, so I think she's got enough on trying to just look after my dad. But, yeah, I think they do use that just a little bit as an excuse...”*

Abigail felt comparing herself with others in the community and their families was unwise:

*“Yeah. That's fatal. I kind of try not to. I mean, I'm quite pragmatic. You're quite optimistic. I think in my head, I think if we work hard enough, eventually it will happen.”*

In contrast to Mark and Katie, Abigail and Thomas felt less resentment about the lack of reciprocity and support from other family members, which they thought could be an advantage. In Abigail's case the estrangement from her parents had been complete and irrevocable.

As already described Gillian and Terry faced the very significant challenge of bringing up their autistic sons largely on their own. Terry was critical of his family members, and their lack of engagement:

*“My side of the family, forget it. My mother’s done it twice in 12 years. It’s not a good sign from my parenting and when she done it, she whinged, so we aren’t going to ask her again. But your mum and dad, they come through when we can get them.*

*I get more mad because there’s people who get a lot more help from their parents, and they’re like, I can’t cope. I’ve got this to do, I’ve got that to do. I think if you had a day in my shoes.”*

He added:

*“With my mother, it pisses me off. That’s being blunt about it, because all I get from my mother is, family first, family first, family first, and then you’re like, eat your words. Come on. You can’t go round saying that because you’re not doing it.*

*They’re all words, they mean very little. That makes me annoyed...”*

Gillian saw things slightly differently:

*“...I’m glad we don’t depend on other people in one sense, because my mum and dad are getting older and if I were really dependent on them, and owt happened, I’d be like what are we going to do now.”*

For others, the absence of family was felt in different ways. After her son Jeremy moved away to university, Lorna became ill with allergic reactions to a range of common substances derived from solvents. This became so serious that she had to retire early from the NHS, after which a lengthy period of caring for her mother and father followed. In many respects, Lorna felt the years that she cared for her parents were a positive after having to give up work:

*“Well, it was a big blow, to stop work... And also I got really depressed as well, having this condition that restricts your life, but once I came round from that, my dad needed me because he'd got terminal cancer, so I moved back to the farm with my son and nursed him until he died...”*

Lorna saw her son and his partner, who lived in London, occasionally, but otherwise had minimal family contact and was estranged from her brother who lived in the same village. In the interview she was frank about her very real loneliness.

Betty (75) moved to the village following a suggestion from her daughter-in-law, but had little contact with her son and his family, who lived only a few streets away:

*My daughter-in-law said oh, come and live near us, it will be great, but I hardly ever see them.”*

This move had been at the cost of losing an active social and cultural life - much of it a function of having spent most of her life in a large and vibrant city. These activities were no longer easily available for her in the village. Betty also helped her other son and his wife, who lived in Leeds, with occasional childcare.

### 6.5.3 New Relationships - Norms and Rules

The discussion with Carole gave a particularly strong insight into how different expectations about the norms and rules of behaviour and family obligation played out in what was essentially a new family. With Carole's and Alan's sons, the new family arrangements were harmonious, and Carole felt that after some initial difficulties, things were going smoothly and her expectations were respected.

The relationships with Alan's daughters were more difficult. She got on well with Alan's daughter Carlie and her partner Jason, although she found Carlie's attitudes difficult to understand, and thought she was not equipped for contemporary life. Carlie had been a mother for seven years, and before that had only ever had one job. Carole felt that she was repeating the pattern of her late mother:

*"I think wi' Carlie she's gonna be just like her mum. She's going to stay home and have loads of kids, basically. And, I think that's what she does... Times have changed now and when I wor... They [the Department of Work and Pensions]*

*didn't badger me until my youngest were like thirteen back then, but they're on at them now to get jobs when they turn five and they're in school."*

Carole thought Carlie would find this difficult, especially in the context of welfare conditionality and tougher benefits regimes, a situation compounded by Carlie's lack of social skills. She felt that Carlie was an exemplary mother, but lacked abilities in terms of household organisation. Nevertheless, her problems - budgeting, dealing with officialdom, her lack of experience of household management - were ones where Carole felt well-equipped to help and support, in a role which was essentially parental.

Dealing with Alan's other daughter Jenny presented Carole with much greater difficulty. Whilst sympathetic, at the same time she felt that she needed to stand up for values and norms she felt were right, and which she believed helped people make the most of their lives and live with others. She found Jenny exasperating.

*"...no matter what you do, you just can't help her. That's her life, she lives like that, and that. Personally I don't know how she can do it, but she does, and she survives!"*

She has tried helping Jenny, and Jenny has moved in on a number of occasions

*"she's been here a few times and we've moved her in, but that's meant there were four kids, because we had my two, Dylan and then Jenny floating in and out... But, it's got to that point where I've had to say enough's enough because*

*I've allus been a person who... I like rules... (laughs) And I think everybody needs rules, because wherever you go in life, you going to meet 'em aren't ya?"*

Jenny, on the other hand, had problems with rules. She was already living on her own when Carole met Alan, and had problems with violence, alcohol and sustaining tenancies. Jenny's behaviour and her financial demands had put a real strain on Carole's relationship with Alan, most recently when Jenny had received an electronic tagging sentence after assaulting another woman. As she says

*"I've told him, it might sound a bit harsh, this, but I didn't sign up for that..."*

The matter was further compounded because Jenny removed the electronic tag she received as part of her sentence, but was not legally sanctioned in any way.

Much of the existing research on the role of family members in caring focusses on elderly relatives or people with disabilities, and little on dealing with demanding or unruly behaviour by teenagers or adults. This situation shows that behaviour of the kind in which Jenny engaged imposed real and demanding emotional work on Carole and Alan.

#### **6.5.4 The Practical Demands of Caring**

Wider families were not necessarily helpful to the parents of children with disabilities, and in some cases the nature of any caring involved was so complex and demanding that



even if other family members were willing to help, it was not feasible. Terry and Gillian and Jennifer and Jordan had been forced back on their own resources. They were unable, because of the highly demanding nature of the care involved for their children, to draw on members of their wider families, even though in both cases they had family members living locally. As Jennifer said

*“Other members of the family, they don’t know how to do it...”*

In Jennifer and Jordan’s case, Jordan’s mother and sister had both tried to help, including taking Carla to visit Jordan’s mother at her home in a seaside town. During the visit, Carla had run away on the beach, at risk to herself, and panicked when she could not find the swings she expected to find. Her size and strength were such that she was difficult to restrain, and Jennifer and Jordan described an approach to her behaviour where monitoring and anticipation had to be constant, and where they had become attuned to her patterns of behaviour.

However, their experience was also replicated by two other sets of parents, both of whom had families locally, but whose children’s disabilities meant that their relatives could not, or would not, provide any support. In the last chapter, the difficulties faced by Gillian and Terry in looking after their three sons, all of whom are autistic, were discussed. This obviously presented particular issues in any consideration of the question of care, and required further examination. Whilst more of the day-to-day burden of care devolved to Gillian, the family were able to call on Terry’s salary from his job for many

of the practical needs they faced, and all three of their sons attended mainstream schools.

With Carla, violence and self-harm were also issues. This included hitting her head against walls and furniture, and violent behaviour in the family car. The family were due to fit further restraints for Carla in the car, as well as precautionary stickers to warn emergency services staff; and a hammer to break glass and windscreens in case Carla forced whoever was driving the car off the road. Carla's violence (and her strength) was a wider concern

*“She’s very violent and she weighs eight stone. She’s ten years old and she’s the same size as me. So when she punches she hurts. When she kicks she hurts, and she knows where to do it...”*

Carla also damaged household items and the home's fabric frequently. Asked how the household got such domestic items repaired, Jennifer explained that in the case of televisions she always purchased extended warranties to cope with the consequences of Carla's destructive behaviour. This approach was also adopted for tablets, which Carla also threw around the living room when she was angry.

Terry and Gillian had the same approach to home decorating and minor repairs. Asked about whether they had undertaken any repairs or improvements to their homes, Terry said:

*“It’s pointless doing any decoration at the minute, because they’ll wreck the place. Then wait until they’re a bit older, then we’ll do it all through, because as soon as you fill that hole, he’ll have a tantrum again and put another hole in it.”*

The disruption to Jordan and Jennifer’s family life had been considerable. At the time of interview Carla’s older sister, Lucy, was living with her grandmother during the week, because Carla was frequently awake for most of the night because her body did not produce the hormone melatonin, which tells the body to shut down and go to sleep, As Jennifer explained:

*“So she doesn’t sleep. I can be up... the longest I’ve ever been up with no sleep whatsoever was three days solid. And it’s shit. Sorry. This morning, she has been up since half past five, which I suppose, that I wouldn’t complain at. It’s when she’s getting up at midnight, and that’s it then while bedtime the next night. She won’t go back to sleep.”*

When Carla was awake, Jennifer had no option but to get up.

*“She’s on computer. I’m watching telly, like this. It’s hard, it really is. We have to take it in turns to get up with her, but she’s... she knows her dad’s a lot stricter with her than I am, so she’ll then start going into meltdown mode, because he’s got up, not me. So it’s just easier for me to do it, to stop that*

*meltdown in the first place. Crazy. It's hard to explain to somebody. You've got to see it to believe it, how it is, do you know what I mean?"*

### 6.5.5 Impact on work

It was clear from the interviews that caring responsibilities could prevent individuals from taking work, or seeking advancement at work. For former care-worker Frank, caring for his elderly mother dominated his life, and although he had recently been offered a part-time job<sup>38</sup>, he had realised he could not have handled its demands at the same time as caring for his mother. This had been emotionally demanding for Frank:

*"I'm not saying it's easy, because it's absolutely not. We butted heads quite a lot in the first couple of months, but we've sort of got into a rhythm now of when she has her moments, I take a step back and breathe and count to ten and come back a little bit calmer."*

For Jennifer and Jordan, a return to work was not feasible while they had to look after Carla, in particular given that their previous work was casual, with unpredictable hours. In addition, taking work would have meant that they would need to go through a complex application process for different benefits. The question of work was further complicated by Jordan's COPD<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup>

A part-time job in the local post office, which Frank could have done within the permitted work allowed for claimants of Carers Allowance.

<sup>39</sup> Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, the name for a group of lung conditions which cause breathlessness.

For Gillian as well, although she was a trained nurse, going back to her profession while she had primary responsibility for her three sons was impossible, primarily because her sons needed her to be available to help mediate and manage their interactions with activities like education.

In some cases, parents had to make difficult choices regarding work. Lorna, a retired NHS professional in her sixties, described the dilemma she was left with when her marriage broke up, just after her son Jeremy (now in his late twenties) was born. She had planned to return to work after taking maternity leave, but changed her mind:

*“When I had Jeremy, I was working at York, and I was going to go back to work. Well the expectation was that I would go back to work, but when it came to the crunch, I couldn't leave Jeremy. I didn't think it was fair... I didn't want to leave him... I didn't think it was fair to leave him because he hadn't got a father... My nan-nan bless her said don't leave him... And I just, I just when it came to the crunch I just didn't want to go back to work. I didn't want to leave Jeremy, I was breast-feeding and I didn't want to hand him over to anybody else.”*

After this, Lorna did eventually return to work when Jeremy went to school, and arranged childcare, on a cash-in-hand basis, with a friend. This was the only example of cash-in-hand payment for childcare in all the interviews undertaken.

*“I dropped him at school in the car, then I went to work, then I'd an arrangement with a friend of mine who'd pick him up from school, give him his tea, then I'd pick him up at about half-past five - six o'clock.”*

Lorna was asked whether she would have returned to work if this support had not been available. She felt she would, and would have worked something out. As Jeremy got older, there was less pressure, especially when he moved to a fee-paying grammar school in the city where Lorna worked. This school had longer hours than state schools, which was easier for her as a working parent.

### **6.5.6 The Impact of Pets**

For Rosemary, one of the respondents, her choice of location and house was largely shaped by the needs of the ten animals she cared for. Her lack of money meant she had to undertake significant repairs and refurbishment in her house, largely on her own. Asked how she felt about doing most things for herself, her comments were revealing:

*“I've had to. I used to pay for somebody to do everything, but that were another life. That was when I didn't have the responsibility, I only had one cat. I didn't have the responsibility of ten animals and the cost that goes with it and the insurance, and I spend more on animal food than I spend on my own. So I've made myself learn how to do things.”*

She detailed spending of £60 per week on food for the animals, £80 per month on insurance, and vets bills of £1700 in one case in the previous year. Her neighbour helped her with domestic repairs, but when he was unemployed for ten months, Rosemary fed him, and his four cats. In much of the rest of the interview Rosemary discussed aspects of animal care, including the six months she spent in an Eastern European country to secure EU pet passports after she left the near-Eastern country where she had been living, a process which she estimated cost her £20,000.

### **6.5.7 Summary**

Activities which most families take for granted, like trips to the cinema, presented significant challenges for the families with autistic children. Caring for others was such a strong focus in the lives of these carers, and others, that they did not necessarily address their own isolation or health problems. Care in the community for these respondents' autistic children depended almost exclusively on their families. A number of households had no family support with childcare, which was a source of some bitterness and resentment. It was also clear that in some cases, family members did not necessarily help older relatives with household tasks such as gardening or minor repairs.

A new relationship and marriage which brought two families together necessarily involved dealing with different norms and expectations regarding behaviour and responsibilities. Notionally independent adults could have problems which still had a

significant impact on their parents. Dealing with these problems involved very significant levels of practical help and emotional labour. This was further complicated when parents felt that statutory agencies within the criminal justice system offered them no role, and were leaving them unsupported in helping adult children.

For their parents caring for children with serious disabilities was complex, demanding and could not easily be shared with people who were inexperienced. It was also deeply disruptive of normal routines such as sleep patterns. In addition, caring for children with these complex needs exposed parents to violence and physical risks. It was also clear that the emotional demands of constant care had an impact on an individuals' ability to take up employment. Any decision by carers to forgo benefits and take up employment could also be complicated by the part-time and short-term nature of the work available to them. In any case, for some of the respondents, even when they were not actively caring, they still needed to be on standby to cope with issues such as crises at school.

Caring for animals also had significant impacts for one respondent, financially and in practical terms. This experience was exceptional, and for most of the other respondents with pets, the burden of looking after them was much less constraining, but this example showed the over-riding importance of looking after pets for some people.

## **6.6 Conclusions**

This chapter has discussed the place of care within household strategies, and highlighted its importance for many of the respondents. This was a different kind of study, based on



seventeen semi-structured interviews, as opposed to the largely quantitative survey approaches of previous studies of the informal economy and household work strategies in a UK context (Gershuny & Pahl, 1979; Pahl, 1984; C. C. Williams, 2004, 2010). Nevertheless, it still needs to be recognised that the weight and significance given to care, as against other activities such as car or household repairs represents a change to previous studies by Williams and others (Evans, Syrett, & Williams, 2006; Williams, 2006).

## **Context**

The study reinforces previous research that identifies expectations and preferences for home-based care for children and vulnerable adults being provided within the family or extended family, rather than by friends, neighbours or other individuals within the community (Dex, 2003; Innes & Scott, 2003; Scott, Campbell, & Brown, 2001; Wheelock & Jones, 2002). This runs counter to both popular and academic conceptions of the nature of mining communities where friends and neighbours willingly help (Dennis, Henriques, & Slaughter, 1969; Parry, 2006; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992; Williamson, 1982). It also needs to be recognised that for a number of the households, care was an all-consuming activity, which defined and shaped the entire lives of the whole household.

## **Enablers**

In the case of four autistic children in two households, technology was helping them to access the world and interact with other people, but was also creating challenges.

## **Constraints**

The nature of this caring was frequently physically and emotionally demanding, and needs to be seen as emotion work (Clark, 2013; DeVault, 1999; Hochschild, 2012; Simpson & Acton, 2013; Wharton & Erickson, 1995). Whilst recognising these expectations and preferences for family-based care, it was also clear that for a significant number of the respondents, their wider families were absent from care, because of lack of proximity, personal choice or skills and competences. Only two uses of cash-in-hand payments were identified in caring activities discussed with respondents, suggesting that for these respondents paying for these kinds of services on a cash-in-hand basis was not a part of their household strategies. This was for a number of reasons. First, altruism and duty were the motivations for those involved in caring. Second, the nature of some of the care involved was complex and demanding. Finally, most of the respondents did not have access to family or friendship networks in the village who could have helped in this way.

Potential reasons for this will be considered in the Discussion Chapter, but first it is important to consider the place-based contextual issues, enablers and constraints to household strategies.

## 7.0 Place in Household Strategies

### 7.1 Purpose of the Chapter

*“What I like about it, the countryside. I love my drive to work because I’m not really a city person, but I also like to have stuff near, so it’s kind of a perfect place really.”*

*Sinead (35)*

Sinead’s remark sets the context for a discussion of how the households interviewed felt about the village as a place, and its impact on their household strategies. Most of the interviewees were positive about living in the village, and valued its rural character. There were, however, a number of concerns, particularly about poor public transport links and isolation, and it was also clear that a number of respondents had problems getting things done such as household repairs and garden work. This chapter will examine in more detail how place impacted on the household strategies of respondents.

This chapter has three key purposes

- To describe the context of place-specific assets in the lives of the households, and their impact.

- *To identify the place-based enablers which help households undertake their work strategies, in particular the role of networks outside the household.*
- *To identify the place-based constraints which hinder households in undertaking their work strategies.*

## 7.2 Introduction and Structure

Having considered the role of paid employment and study in helping households manage their strategies, and also considered the place of care within these strategies, this chapter now examines the impact of place and place-specific assets in delivering and supporting these household strategies. These place-specific assets also include wider family networks in the proximity of the village; local actors in the formal and informal economy, and local services, both public services such as schools and private sector services such as supermarkets.

There is a clear contrast between the experience of some of the households which were part of more extensive families, or stronger local networks, including in the informal economy; and those which were not. Most of the respondents did not feel that they had particularly strong local networks, and in some cases reported loneliness and isolation.

## 7.3 Context

This section examines contextual issues related to place. Housing was an important issue for many of the research participants, and the choice to live in the village inevitably had a major impact on how these households functioned. Given the village's location, mobility and car ownership were issues for all the households and access to transport is discussed. There is an examination of the local services which respondents use as part of their household strategies, and the role of other services such as online shopping. Finally, there is a discussion of the role of volunteering.

### 7.3.1 Housing

Across the interviews, participants were clear that access to affordable housing of a good standard was one of the positive factors in their choice of location. Property prices in the area were significantly lower than in other parts of the region, and this allowed households to make choices in terms of work and household strategies that they would not have been able to make elsewhere.

For example, both Mark and Thomas were able to take advantage of the fact that they owned detached houses with garages, which gave them both workshop and storage space for their business activities. For others, the attraction was simply of being able to own a

home of their own. Sinead was very clear that until she found the village, she never thought that she would own her own home:

*“I never thought I’d ever own a house, ever have enough money. I didn’t have any savings really.... So I saved up a small deposit, didn’t know the village, never been here before, at all. I’m not really even sure how I found it, it just came up on my search, because I was originally looking at a town in South Yorkshire, because I go to the gym there.... ”*

Whilst most interviewees, like Sinead, lived in older houses, four households lived in homes which had come about as a result of policies discussed previously intended to expand housing and diversify tenure in the village - Terry and Gillian, Katie and Mark, Abigail and Thomas, and Briony. For Briony, on a relatively modest salary as a transport administrator, moving to the village also offered her the opportunity to get on the property ladder, and enabled other participants to access homes of a size they could not afford elsewhere in the region.

### **7.3.2 Mobility and Car Ownership**

For all the respondents in work, vehicle-ownership was critical. None of them used public transport to get to work, and individuals generally reported both relatively easy commutes, and easy access to the national motorway network. Two households

maintained their own vehicles, with most households using local garages or main dealers. Non-working households also had access to their own vehicles.

In contrast to some other respondents who had reservations about the village's transport links, Sinead was positive about the convenience of the bus service to the nearby station on the East Coast Main Line, which meant that she could go out socially in Leeds with ease.

*“...the bus is a pound. It's brilliant. I can get to Leeds in an hour and five minutes.”*

Nevertheless, Sinead's shift patterns and the location of her work on an out-of-town business park meant that she had no alternative but to use a car to commute. Commuting to the nearest large towns involved journeys that took between forty and ninety minutes by bus, and in many cases key employment locations on peripheral industrial estates were not served by public transport.

### **7.3.3 Local Services**

Interviews with the respondents showed relatively limited use of local facilities, apart from one of the primary schools and the primary care centre. One of the respondents, Carole, returned to learning through adult education classes at the community centre, and still worked as an administrator, organiser and cleaner for the centre. During the

interview with Mark and Katie, Mark identified one of the workshop units as a potential venue for business expansion or working jointly in a shared space with other local entrepreneurs.

The village had some shops, but these were small, had a limited range and were widely reported during the fieldwork as being expensive. Mark and Katie used internet shopping for a period, but found it did not meet their needs, with out-of-stock items frequently substituted with something they did not want. As Katie said:

*“...you've planned your meal planner and then they say "Oh we didn't have any of this, and we've replaced it with this", and you can't use that ingredient?”*

Instead, they relied on different supermarkets within a ten mile radius, and used discount vouchers supplied by Katie's employer as part of a rewards package. Thomas and Abigail adopted a slightly different approach, and shopped at a smaller supermarket in a neighbouring village, or with one of the German discounters in a small town five miles away. For both households, their shopping choices necessitated access to a car, which was the case with all the households interviewed. Carole's husband Alan did their household shopping on his motorcycle, which sometimes presented issues with bulkier items.

Unlike most of the other respondents, Briony was happy shopping online, although when she wanted to see items before purchasing them she visited a Tesco in the local town on



the way home from work. She used online shopping because it allowed her to control her spending more easily:

*“I like to do the online shopping, because I find, if I go into a supermarket, and I’m only going in for a chicken, I’ll come out after I’ve spent £50. I can’t trust myself in a supermarket. I’ll just buy things... I can see how much everything’s costing me. You’ve got your total and everything.”*

Whilst relatively easy access to local facilities such as parcel collection, adequate broadband and business development opportunities were useful for Thomas and Mark, other local facilities and services (or their absence) presented a problem for others. This was particularly apparent for the single female respondents, almost all of whom reported difficulties with sourcing reliable and trustworthy local tradespeople such as gardeners or plumbers. This had led to either increased self-provisioning, or to work not being done at all.

#### **7.3.4 Volunteering in the Community**

Involvement in volunteering amongst respondents was limited. Five individuals were actively involved in volunteering, and just one, Katie, was doing this in the village. Betty was still involved in a community project for elderly people in Leeds, where she remained on the management committee. Lorna volunteered on animal welfare issues. John and Karen were active in the running of their church, in a town three miles away.

Katie was volunteering in the community, as a way of building her networks, and through this becoming a resource for others as a Community First Responder. This involved using the advanced first-aid skills she had developed in her cabin-crew role to support people experiencing cardiac emergencies before the arrival of an ambulance. This delivered very direct help for local people.

*“...if it's a cardiac arrest situation, you need your defibrillator like within one to two minutes... So the idea is that I would get there and start chest compressions and put the defib on and start oxygen therapy... They'll always dispatch an ambulance at the same time, so you know there's an ambulance coming, but it's predominantly basic life support to start your compressions early... ...and just gather information for when the paramedics get there and hand them over. A lot of the time the paramedics find you supportive because you can take away panicking relatives to another room and calm them down while they work on the patient.”*

This was an interesting way in which the village was benefiting from the skills of a new resident. Katie reported that limited expenses were available for volunteers undertaking this role, but she chose not to claim them. Katie's volunteering role would have been inconceivable until recently, and highlights new approaches in the delivery of medical services in the community, as well as interventions informed by evidence-based medicine.

### 7.3.5 Summary

Moving to the village had offered respondents the opportunity buy homes for the first time, or to access homes of a size they could not afford elsewhere in the region. However this needed to be balanced against the fact that public transport timetables, journey times and reliability were such that no respondent used the network for commuting purposes.

The village had a range of local facilities, which most respondents used to some extent. None of the respondents used local shops for anything other than emergencies, with most of them using either branches of the major supermarkets or the German discounters within a five mile radius of the village. Whilst respondents were confident about using online retailers for items such as clothing, there was a general reluctance to do grocery shopping online. Some needs were not met adequately in the local economy, with a number of the single female respondents reporting problems sourcing reliable and trustworthy tradespeople. For these individuals, not being able to get basic home repairs and gardening tasks done had a significant impact on health and quality of life.

Involvement by respondents in volunteering was relatively limited, and most of it took place with organisations or churches based outside the village.

## 7.4 Enablers

This section examines what assets specific to the village helped or enabled respondents with their household strategies. The impact of housing conditions on respondents is outlined, and different approaches to dealing with domestic repairs are discussed. The interviewees' involvement with local organisations and churches are examined, and the support they could call on from family members locally. Finally the place of pets in household strategies is considered, including how pet-ownership enabled social networking.

### 7.4.1 Housing

The social landlords in the area had made recent substantial investment in local homes, in part arising from Decent Homes Programme investment introduced by the New Labour Governments. During the interviews no tenants or ex-tenants raised concerns about the state of their homes, and there was relatively little need for many of the minor home improvements which were a feature of household work strategies discussed by Pahl and others (Pahl, 1984; C. Williams & Windebank, 2001).

Only four respondents lived in pre-1919 properties, David, Carl, Lorna and Sinead. David and Carl had both done extensive improvements on their own homes some years previously, but Sinead and Lorna were the two respondents who identified housing

repairs and improvements as their major unmet needs. Those living in more modern properties generally identified relatively few issues in relation to home maintenance or improvement, and most undertook this work themselves or engaged tradespeople in the conventional economy, rather than on a cash-in-hand basis.

### **7.4.2 Getting Things Done**

Contacts and networks were used to meet a wide range of needs. This included help with household tasks and household repairs, help with identifying and obtaining work, help with transport and help with childcare. What was also notable was that in some cases respondents opted not to use local networks to get things done, in particular locally-recommended traders, instead utilising service contracts and extended warranties.

All the respondents were asked how they would deal with a situation where a washing-machine, or another key household appliance, broke down. In most cases they had someone they could ask to help them with washing on a temporary basis, but in the long-term most respondents regarded it as an essential item, and would be able to buy a new one from savings or income. As Terry stated:

*“No, I’d just do it. It’s got to be done. You just take that knock.”*

Only Jennifer and Jordan were unsure how they would be able to afford a new washing-machine in the medium to long-term. Rosemary and Carole both had access to individuals who might be able to repair a washing-machine. Carole's husband, Alan was a motor-mechanic and might be able to complete simple repairs. Carole also indicated that she knew someone who repaired washing-machines on a cash-in-hand basis; and Rosemary's neighbour also repaired domestic appliances and items such as lawn-mowers on a cash-in-hand basis.

Rosemary and Carole were the main users of informal networks of this nature to get other home repairs and improvements done. Carole was able to get most home repairs done through her own family network, or through her husband Alan. Carole's family, and that of her husband Alan, largely live within a ten mile radius, and along with Carole and Alan's work contacts had helped with tasks such as dismantling and re-erecting a garage originally at Alan's former home, as well as with electrical work at Carole's home.

Rosemary had developed her own skills and knowledge in this area, but as well as help from her neighbour, she paid a retired plasterer whom she knew from dog-walking to undertake plastering work on her home on a cash-in-hand basis, and used his son who is an electrician on the same basis. In addition, she used YouTube videos extensively to help her learn skills such as tiling and kitchen-fitting, and sourced items such as cupboards and worktops on auction-sites.

David had been able to call on family members to help him with improvements and additions to his home, and had worked together with his son on some home engineering

projects. Karl was also able to call on work related contacts to help with property repairs and improvements, but in both cases these men were also technically skilled and competent themselves, and capable of undertaking quite complex projects.

### **7.4.3 Local Organisations and Churches**

There was limited membership of any local organisations. For many years, Owen had been an active cricketer with the local club, playing into his fifties before switching to bowls, and remained a social member of the cricket club. His wife Grace had been involved with badminton clubs in the area into her sixties, but reported that there were fewer local teams because of the cost of hiring facilities. Mark and Katie's daughter, Maisie, was actively involved in a gymnastics club in a nearby town.

Otherwise, the only involvement was with churches. Owen and Grace attended a church in an adjacent village, although they were also socially involved in parish activities of the local congregation of a different denomination. John and Karen were both active Anglicans, in a part of the local diocese known within parts of the Church of England as the "Biretta Belt" because of the preponderance of Anglo-Catholic incumbents and congregations.

John<sup>40</sup> and Karen's Church involvement revolved around her role in Sunday School, and John's role assisting with services. A few years ago, John had been heavily involved with a previous congregation, but what he saw as a failure to deliver on undertakings meant that he and Karen moved parishes to another Anglo-Catholic parish in a small town nearby.

*"We were there for a good number of years and we got on fantastically well with the Parish priest, but... The bottom line is they say they wanted new people in, but when new people came in, they didn't want anything. I think they were afraid new people were going to change things. We've done it this way, as it was in the beginning, and now and ever shall be. They just did not get the support. I used to be a lay reader in the Church of England. I still am, but you have to be licenced to a parish, but Father X was trying to get me, he was going to go through the PCC<sup>41</sup>.... ... but when it came to actually voting on it, they said, no, they didn't want me as a lay reader, which he was absolutely furious about.*

*And so, at that point, we're going to go where we can be more useful. And as it happened, I took St X's just after this had happened to Walsingham for a week, and I was their coach driver. And I got to know them, they've got a really good range from babies up to people who were almost 100 and everything in between. So I said to Karen, let's give it a try. We've been there ever since, because they still have got a good range of ages."*

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<sup>40</sup> John and Karen are the only respondents whom the author knew previously, whilst working for the local council.

<sup>41</sup> Parochial Church Council.



This highlights the vulnerability of relationships, and the fragility of trust in institutions which are essentially voluntary organisations. The PCC's decision not to recognise John as a lay-reader, when he had made a significant commitment in terms of time, faith and emotion to develop into the role, meant that he felt essentially rejected. On the other hand, their new parish had been very welcoming, and as a result had recruited two dedicated and committed volunteers.

#### 7.4.4 Family Support

Two respondents, Sinead and Briony, although in their thirties, and living independently, still had close links and support from their families. Unlike Sinead, Briony did not go to university and has never lived outside the area, and also had a larger family network with a married brother, and three grandparents in their eighties and nineties still living locally. At the time of the interview, Briony had been living in her home for four months, having previously lived with her mother in a small town five miles away. Moving out of her mother's house had been a major decision for Briony:

*“I was 35 and I thought I’ve got to do it. It was a bit scary because I’d been going out with my boyfriend for a few years before that and he was a bit younger than me, and he’d said, you stop at your mum’s all the time, we need to buy us own house. I was like, no, no, I can’t afford it. I was a bit scared of doing it and then we split up and I just thought, I’ve got to do it, because if I don’t do it now, I’m never going to do it. I’m going to be having a mortgage until I’m 80 if I don’t*

*start and try and do it. That was the thing. It were to do with my age. I thought I've got to do it."*

In addition, Briony's decision was partly shaped by a coach accident she experienced, outlined in the previous chapter. This was a significant event in her town's life, with one young woman killed and nineteen others injured, a number with life-changing disabilities:

*"I only, touch wood, I just fractured my pelvis, that's all I did. You'll have the girls in the wheelchair. Like my sister-in-law, she was sat next to me. She was in hospital for oh, god, weeks, a couple of months. She was really, in a wheelchair for a while and I was sat next to her and I only fractured my pelvis."*

Along with her father's death, Briony felt this had possibly given her the impetus to move on with her life:

*"I think probably if anything, it made me want to move out and get on with life, because you don't know when it's going to end, and it's like come on, just get on and do it probably more than discouraged me from doing it."*

Briony remained very close to her mother, Margaret, and relied on her for help and advice on practical issues such as household repairs. The relationship was a strong one, and in some respects Briony was still dependent on her mother. Margaret also cared for Briony's grandmother, and Briony's disabled aunt, and the caring relationship between

them was clear and fitted a conventional understanding of what care is. For her mother, Margaret helped with shopping and other domestic tasks. Margaret's sister, who is 60, and had cerebral palsy, had moved into a residential care setting but came home to stay with their mother every week. When she was at home, Margaret helped her with using the toilet and getting to bed. This was a task that Briony was not physically able to do.

*"I wouldn't be able to do what my mum does. My mum's 60-odd and she can lift, my aunty's quite big, but she can lift her, put her on the toilet, put her into bed. I can't do it. I'm not strong enough. My mum is, and my mum's very strong, probably from doing it all her life."*

It was clear that Margaret was the key to the well-being of her wider family.

Sinead had no contacts in the village who could help with practical tasks, and relied on contacts of her mother's as well as contacts of school friends in the village where she grew up five miles away. Although she had doubts about her mother's networks, on one occasion her mother was able to help

*"I was taking all my neighbour's bins round one day and I happened to notice there was a big hole in my roof, and I'd just bought a picture as well, which I shouldn't have really done, to hang up. And I was like, oh my God, that money I've bought on that picture, oh, my roof. I was getting really stressed. I was thinking it's going to cost me £500 and so my mum said she'd ask people at work*

*and someone recommended someone that lives in the next village down. He came round and just put the tile on, £45. Bish, bash, bosh.”*

The fact that the village was quite close to her mother, and she could draw on her mother’s contacts was valuable to Sinead, and the location of the village was definitely a positive resource for her. She would have liked to live closer to her mother, but houses in her village were unaffordable for her.

#### **7.4.5 Pets**

As discussed previously, looking after pets was a very important part of the lives of a number of the respondents, and shaped choices about where they lived and worked. Owning and walking dogs assisted with developing social networks, including meeting individuals able to help with practical tasks, and was something that living in a village environment enabled.

Because of her dogs and cats, Rosemary had specifically chosen to work twelve-and-a-half hour night shifts, to allow her to walk the dogs during the day. Rosemary, who had lived in the village for longer than the other single women interviewed, was clear that being able to walk her dogs during the daytime had given her access to social networks in the village. She bought a house which needed significant repair, but met a retired plasterer while walking the dogs who had done her plastering work at low cost on a

cash-in-hand basis. She also helped her neighbour with his animals, and in turn he had helped her with repairs to white goods and other equipment; partly at-cost, partly cash-in-hand, and some in return for her supporting him with food for himself and his animals during a recent redundancy. The one thing that Rosemary would not seek help with was actually exercising the dogs, as she felt only she understood her animals and their health issues.

In the early stages of the interview with Sinead, she expressed an aspiration to own a dog in the next few years. For her the companionship would be welcome, as well as the scope for walking the dog in the countryside locally, and the opportunity to meet other local dog-walkers, whom she felt were sociable and helpful people. Sinead's view on dogs was borne out by the experience of Briony and Rosemary, both of whom had dogs, and who were glad of the companionship they offered, as well as the contact with other like-minded people met while dog-walking. Briony had had her dog for two years at the time of interview, having got him from rescue kennels:

*“So it will be coming up to two years, this year. So he is left all day when I'm at work but I think he's okay. We go on a walk as soon as I come in. He goes on plenty of walks.... Then at the weekend, that's what we do on the weekend as well. We go on walks.”*

While she was out walking with her dog, she met other local people doing the same. Asked about this, she viewed it as a very positive aspect of dog-ownership:

*“Do you know what? That is the thing I love about having a dog. I looked after my brother’s dog and before he moved to [Nearby town], he got one and asked if I’d look after it every day, because I finished work early. So I looked after that dog for years, and then when they had the babies, they no longer needed me and that’s when I ended up getting (my dog)... I love it. I love seeing other people with dogs. Everybody, every dog walker, they’re always like hiya, they stop and talk to your dog and you talk to their dog, and you have a little chat, right, see you later. And you don’t know each other, but I think it’s really social to have a dog. You find people talk to you. Not like in an annoying way, just in a nice way. Hiya, are you alright?”<sup>42</sup>*

For Briony, as a new resident, her dog was important to her. A relationship she was in had recently ended, and she was still affected by the injury and trauma she experienced following the major road traffic accident in which she was involved. It was clear that her dog was a companion, but also that dog-walking gave her a place in the community, and facilitated social interaction, which she valued.

Rosemary and Briony were not the only respondents with dogs, as Thomas and Abigail and Terry and Gillian also had dogs, with Gillian also owning a horse. Gillian regarded looking after her horse at a local DIY livery as a valued interlude while her sons were at school, which was made easier by the ready availability of affordable grazing land locally. For these couples, easy access to green space was important to them as pet-owners.

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<sup>42</sup> These conversations mirror almost exactly those reported by Rowan in her Scottish research, discussed in the next chapter (Rowan, 2015).

#### 7.4.6 Summary

Recent investment by the major social landlord in the area meant that socially rented housing was in a good state of repair. Two homeowners had undertaken significant improvement works on their own account, but two female homeowners had found it difficult to find suitable tradespeople for relatively minor work. Virtually every respondent felt that they could deal with the consequences of a domestic appliance breakdown in the short-term through depending on friends, and in the longer term through buying a replacement.

There was limited membership of local organisations, with only four respondents with a history of membership of local clubs, societies or churches. Two respondents had been actively involved in sport into middle age. The experience of two other respondents showed the fragility of relationships and trust in voluntary organisations.

Two of the female respondents, although in their thirties and living independently, were still close to their mothers and depended on them for support. One of the respondents was able to call on her mother's social networks for help with domestic repairs. This highlights the continuing practical importance of proximity to parents for some independent adults.

Pets (in particular dogs) were very important to a number of respondents, and in some cases their lives were shaped around the needs and demands of their dogs. Dog-ownership had also helped a number of the respondents develop new social networks. In

this context the village's rurality, as well as easily accessible green-space, were valued for offering the space to walk dogs, therefore enabling dog ownership. Dog-walking had also enabled one respondent to find tradespeople who could help her with home improvements. Owning and caring for animals was also an important source of relaxation for some respondents.

## **7.5 Constraints**

This section looks at some of the constraints and difficulties that living in the locality presented for the research participants. One resident had negative feelings and opinions about the neighbourhood, and these are explored. The impact of austerity on local services is discussed, and their specific effects on respondents. Transport problems, and their implications for households are examined, as well as issues relating to driving. Difficulties with the local school faced by one household are considered along with problems some individuals had because of their difficulties in engaging suitable tradespeople. Finally, the effects of loneliness for some respondents are outlined.

### **7.5.1 Location and Neighbours**

Whilst most of the interviewees had limited interactions with their neighbours, they generally got on well with them, and most did not highlight any difficulties during interviews. Similarly, they were happy with the village's location. Rosemary, however, had some reservations. With ten pets, her location was an important resource for



Rosemary. She had reservations about living in the village, but recognised that it was a place she could afford a house which made a safe home for her pets:

*“Living here, which isn’t ideally where I want to be.... living. I don’t live in the house that I used to live in and I don’t have the standard of living that I had when I lived in Turkey. So yeah, I’m not 100 percent happy here. I’m happy because it’s safe for the animals... If I’d not have had the animals, I’d have had greater choices of where to be, but I couldn’t live anywhere near a main road because of the cats and so I didn’t have much choice. I’m not 100 percent happy here.”*

A number of factors contributed to this. She was over an hour and a half from her son and brother, and she did not feel comfortable with some of her neighbours:

*“I’m not happy with some of the neighbours. A lot of them are really nice, but some of them are not. I had the police on a neighbour across the road. I hope you’re not going there. For setting his dogs on the cats, because he doesn’t like cats, so I’ve had the police to him three times.”*

She was engaged in renovating her house at the time of interview, and stated that in the long term her aspiration was to live somewhere she finds more pleasant, and closer to her son, brothers and sisters:

*“When I finished the renovating, when everything’s finished and the garden’s finished, when I can make money on it, I’ll put it up for sale and try and move closer.”*

Her son aged was 28, and lived in a town on the outskirts of Leeds twenty miles north. He was married with one child, and lived near his wife’s parents. Rosemary whose return to England was discussed above, was limited in where she could live, both for financial reasons and because she needed somewhere she could accommodate her ten dogs and cats away from a main road. She was unhappy living where she did:

*“It’s too far away from my son and my brother. It’s nearly an hour, 45 minutes to an hour journey, so I don’t see much of my son, because he can’t be bothered to come all the way over here. He says I might as well still be in Bolton (where she lived previously), because it took an hour to get to Bolton and it takes an hour, because it’s all windy, country roads, it takes an hour to get here.*

## 7.5.2 Austerity

The village had benefited significantly from investment under the New Labour Government, both from the capital spending mentioned previously, but also from revenue support for initiatives such as Early Years activities, Adult Education and public health spending targeted at problems such as COPD, Diabetes and Obesity which were issues in the village and other communities like it. Austerity measures introduced by the Coalition Government from 2010 onwards had reduced funding targeted at deprived areas significantly and had effects locally.

The most notable loss was the village's SureStart centre, which had followed closely the original remit of the SureStart programme, and had targeted not just deprived and troubled families within the area, but had sought to help all families with young children locally. As a result it was also used by relatively affluent parents like Thomas and Abigail, and Mark and Katie. They had found it a valuable source of advice and support as relatively new parents, with no network of friends and family in the area.

In addition, one respondent, Frank, highlighted the likely personal impact of the closure of a gym attached to a local health centre. Given that he was HIV positive, as well as having a number of other limiting musculo-skeletal problems, his fitness was important to him. He had done some volunteering in the nearest large city which came with gym membership, but when the volunteering ceased, so did the membership. He had used the health centre gym to help him improve his fitness and lose weight, and its location

meant that it could be targeted at individuals with specific health problems who might not feel comfortable using a conventional gym.

### 7.5.3 Transport

Although virtually all the research participants were drivers with access to a vehicle, as discussed previously in relation to Sinead, there was some desire to use public transport for social purposes, although it did not always address their needs. Just as importantly, from some respondents point of view, the local network was not suitable for commuting, in particular over longer distances. Although access to Leeds and Doncaster on the electrified East Coast Main Line was relatively easy, travel to Barnsley and Sheffield was less easy because of the limits of rail infrastructure designed for coal traffic, and used elderly Pacer rolling-stock<sup>43</sup>. Ticketing was also an issue. West Yorkshire and South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Authorities both operated county-wide travel pass schemes, but they could not be used for cross-boundary journeys, with travellers forced to pay for expensive railway season tickets instead, which forced at least one interviewee to use a car for travel instead.

For others the transport issues were even more stark. Carole managed her life without a driving licence or a car, but recognised it would cause serious problems if she ever had to change job. Briony's reluctance to drive on major roads and in cities has been discussed previously. Her mother had to help Briony with driving. As she said:

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<sup>43</sup> A Leyland National bus-body mounted on a four-wheel freight wagon chassis, introduced during the mid-1980's on local railways in the North of England, renowned for their poor ride quality, slow speed and lack of comfort.

*“I didn’t want to learn to drive. I passed my test because my mum says once you’ve passed your test, we’ll never see you. You’ll be here, there and everywhere. I never really drove that far out of the village ever since. I’m not confident enough. A few years ago, I had an extra driving lesson to take me on the A1, to take me into Doncaster, to take me into a town. I got out the car and I was sweating and the windows had steamed up. It’s not for me, I was too nervous. I wish I could do it, but I can’t. I’m so restricted.”*

She recognised that this restricted her:

*“...if I want to go shopping, I need an outfit. I have to ring my mum and see when my mum can take me into town or I have to buy something online. I do a lot of online shopping.”*

Even online shopping presented problems:

*“I had a parcel delivered here the other day. Didn’t realise when I moved here there was no post office, where parcels go to when you’re not in, and it had been taken to Wakefield. That’s my local [parcel] post office. So I rang my mum. Mum, you’re never going to believe where my local post office is. Wakefield, where the Sainsbury’s is. She said, you’ll have to wait until I can take you. I rang my younger brother up, would you mind taking me to Wakefield. So I had to get*

*him to take me to get my parcel. You're always relying on somebody else to do stuff."*

As pointed out in the previous chapter, Briony was also clear that leaving her current job and working in a new location would present her with problems.

#### **7.5.4 Local Public Services and Choice**

In rural locations, where there may be only one provider of a service such as schooling, a breakdown in relationships can leave household's vulnerable and facing difficult choices. Katie reported that she and Mark were experiencing problems with the Headteacher and Governors at Maisie's school and their response to a complaint she had made.

Although Katie's original complaint about an aspect of school policy was upheld, the school's Headteacher then pursued complaints against Katie with her employer and the organisation with whom she volunteered. These related to use of social media. Katie had been able to rely on free legal advice from her employer to protect her position, and was pursuing a further complaint against the Headteacher. Katie and Mark recognised that this could lead to a situation where relationships with the school broke down irretrievably, but felt that there was an injustice they needed to remedy. As Katie said:

*“It's not her first accusation of bullying and harassment, so we've basically said if the Governors support her on this, that shows the whole system is corrupt and whether she's won or not, we'll remove Maisie from school because she can't... We can't have her in that environment.”*

Asked about how they would handle this in practical terms, they recognised that they might have to move Maisie to a school outside the community, which would be difficult, but as Katie said:

*“I suppose at the end of the day, we'll deal with it. Like we do with everything else. We're just juggling...”*

Nevertheless, with only one other primary school locally, this highlighted a situation where the family was potentially vulnerable because of their dependence on local schooling, and would have to make sacrifices in order to obtain a place at a school they felt comfortable with. Despite these difficulties, Mark and Katie valued the role of the school in the community, but felt that it was underdeveloped, particularly in terms of helping bring parents together and acting as a hub for the village. This was something they would particularly value as relative newcomers to the area. As Katie said:

*“I think that's where we get a bit het up, because we feel like school should be the central pillar for all that kind of thing, and they should encourage parents,*

*you know, to kind of bond and communicate, and that should be the hub for parents... That's how I see it...<sup>44</sup>*

The situation was compounded by the fact that the local primary schools were both part of academy trusts, and not subject to the full range of checks, balances and redress which would have been available at a Local Authority school.

### **7.5.5 Private Sector Services**

The two retired female respondents, Lorna and Betty, had a rather different experience of the resources available to them in the village, with both women reporting difficulties with getting household repairs and gardening work done. Betty's problem was a relatively simple one - the need to deal with an overgrown garden which would have been an afternoon's work for a reasonably strong and fit individual. It was clear from talking to her that she felt that she should reasonably have been able to expect help from her son on this.

Lorna had more serious problems, in particular finding tradespeople she could trust, and who were sensitive to the particular problems she had with a wide range of chemicals and solvents.

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<sup>44</sup> Ironically, something very close to the vision of community schooling pioneered in the locality by West Riding County Council after the Second World War, under the leadership of Sir Alec Clegg; or that outlined by Lyda Hanafin as discussed earlier (Clegg, 1980; Clegg & Megson, 1973; Crawford, 2008; Hanifan, 1916; Hilary Robinson, 2013; Newsam, 2008).



*“I seem to be such a poor judge of workmen - I won't call them tradesmen - because that sounds really snobbish but I do tend to get ripped [off]. I seem to have got mug written there (points at forehead) so I think when you're a single woman people do tend to rip you off, if you're not careful.”*

Lorna's difficulties were exacerbated by her health, both her solvent allergy, and the after-effects of cancer, which had weakened her and limited what she could do. Gardening was a particular anxiety for her, as her garden had become overgrown. She was sensitive to her neighbours' feelings on this, but she had been unable to find anyone to help:

*“I've had people in the past, but I've never got the right person. The people that I've had are the people who, if it moves cut it down... They've been more... Ahhh.. Not proper gardeners, more, what's the word? I can't think of it... That chop through a plant... They call themselves gardeners... Have names like Greenfingers... But basically they chop my plants down with my weeds and everything”*

The same issue applied to other tasks:

*“It's more having someone to clean my gutters out worries, for me... Yeah... Just... I know this again sounds sexist, but I've never been... I'm practical when it comes to animals, but I'm not practical when it comes to doing stuff. I can wire a plug. My dad taught me to do that when I was a little kid, but other than that...”*

*I don't know many women who can clean their own gutters out. I can rod my own drains. I've got my own set of rods and I'm good with drains, on Victorian drains, but you know things like clearing out your gutters... You need a man, don't you? (Laughs!)... I've had that many cowboys messing my house about that I'd rather leave it neglected than get someone who's going to make it worse."*

Recommendations had not worked for her in the past either:

*"Even if they have a good reputation. Who-it-was was recommended by the farm opposite, we had him for our central heating at the farm. I had him for my central heating here... ...he'd come every year to do a service. When I eventually got British Gas to take over, the chap said when did you last have this boiler serviced? I said, well, I have it serviced every year, from the person who put it in. He said honestly it looks like it's not been done for five or six years. It's filthy. So you know what I mean, even somebody that we trusted that had got a good reputation..."*

Lorna put this partly down to her lack of contacts in the village. Although she was born and brought up locally, she moved away for a period and her career meant that the time she spent in the village when she returned there to live was relatively limited:

*"I just kind of feel that I'm at a real disadvantage compared to most people. Because most people have got fairly big families around here... I mean you'll know that it used to be a mining area and so people have got big extended*

*families and tend to stay in the area. There's lots of newcomers in the new houses, but like the traditional families, they just know everybody. So I don't know many people from the village, other than people me dad's introduced me to, so I kind of, because I've been away a lot, although I'm from here, I don't feel that I have the same contacts, everyday contacts, that most people do..."*

In some senses, Lorna was expressing in very candid terms what Thomas and Abigail and Mark and Katie had implied about how they perceived local family networks operated. A tradesperson could afford to alienate a single person household with excessive pricing or poor practice, but they might be more cautious when one bad job would be reported and discussed extensively across the village. This caution about using local traders was also reported by John and Karen, who had chosen the option of more expensive extended warranties on electrical goods to ensure repairs were done by trusted traders. Mark also reported a bad experience with a local electrician.

### **7.5.6 Loneliness**

Loneliness was an issue for a number of respondents, which was either discussed explicitly in interviews, or hinted at in other contexts during discussions. A number of respondents reported limited involvement with their families, for example Rosemary, who rarely saw her son, his wife and his child, even though they only lived thirty miles away. Rosemary was resigned to a lack of contact with her son:

*“...he’s got his own life and he can’t be bothered. He’s got too much going on in his own life. He’s got his own family and his own friends and his own interests, but I know exactly how he feels, because when my mum moved to Scarborough, we hardly every went, because it was an hour and a half trip. So I know exactly where he’s coming from.”*

Asked about whether her son or his wife ever ask for her help in looking after her grandson, she responded that she felt that it was inevitable that her son’s wife and family would have the primary role. Asked for her feelings on this, she seemed resigned to this too:

*“Do you know what, I don’t have any feelings on it. I miss my son more than my grandson to be honest. But I think, with couples, if it’s not your daughter with a grandchild, you’re never as close, because the girls go to their mum, do you know what I mean. So the grand-kids end up being closer to the maternal grandparents, and I think that’s what happened. Because obviously when he were a baby, she spent a lot of time at her mother’s, and he used to come and see me once a week, but he were at her mum’s every day.”*

For Lorna too, with her son living in London, animals were very important to her, both her late mother’s dog, which she still looked after, and some sheep which she kept on a farm in another county. Otherwise, she felt deeply isolated, especially since both her mother and father, whom she looked after on a daily basis in their final years, were

dead; a situation made worse by her estrangement from her brother who owned the family farm. Caring for her parents absorbed all of her time:

*“...when he (her father) died my mum got Alzheimers and needed full-time looking-after so I stayed on at the farm with my son and looked after my mum, until she broke her neck early in 2013. And then for the seven months she was in hospital I was with her every day all day, every day, from breakfast until night looking after her. So that takes us up to, what, three years ago? I was too busy to feel isolated when I was looking after my parents. It's just this last, since my mum went into a home, and then died, that I've....felt really isolated, because the only family member I've got around here, my brother, doesn't speak to me so I felt really isolated from my family..”*

Lorna now felt deeply isolated. Although she lived at her own house, she visited the family farm on a daily basis to look after the dog which had been her mother's companion.

*“...she's technically my brother's dog, but when my mum was at home, she was more like a companion to my mum. She's a German Shepherd, but she's basically a house-dog, she was used to being in the house all the time, and following me around. After my mum went into hospital and then the home, my brother just put her on the end of a chain. I cannot stand dogs being left on the end of chains, so I just go to bring her in the house, keep her company, give her some cuddles really..”*

Betty's situation was different, but she also felt the effects of isolation. Although she lived only a few streets from one of her sons and his family, she did not see them often, and her son was not in a position to help her with tasks where she needed help such as gardening and maintaining the house. Although she was active and a car-owner, and often attended to events in Wakefield, as well as the community project she helped with in Leeds, her ability to get things done in the house and garden was limited by health issues. She had restricted mobility and limited strength after a serious fall twelve years ago, and when interviewed had recently sustained a further back injury.

### **7.5.7 Summary**

One interviewee expressed the view that the location of the village was not ideal, and represented a compromise with what she aspired to. This individual's problems with a neighbour were unusual across the study. Most respondents reported friendly relationships with neighbours, although tasks and favours undertaken by or for neighbours were generally limited to minor issues like wheeling in bins after collection, or taking in parcels.

A number of participants highlighted the impact of austerity on services which they used, in particular the closure of the village's Surestart Centre. Changes to health funding, and the unwinding of New Labour era spending on areas such as public health

had left facilities such as the gym at the Health Centre at risk. The absence of simple cross-boundary ticketing arrangements were a disincentive for some respondents to use public transport for commuting. One set of parents felt placed in a vulnerable position when relationships with their child's schools broke down, and this was exacerbated in this small rural communities where choices were limited.

A number of single women reported particular problems getting household repairs or garden tasks done, and they highlighted that in some cases relatively small jobs could assume considerable significance when a suitable tradespeople cannot be found. Single women respondents felt they were vulnerable to abusive business practices, and a number of respondents felt disadvantaged by a lack of local contacts to advise on repairs and maintenance.

The village's relatively isolated location was a factor in some respondent's lack of contacts with their families. Lengthy periods of caring for elderly parents also limited the scope of some respondents to maintain or develop social contacts. Health issues were limiting the ability of one respondent to make social contacts, and were contributing to her loneliness.

## 7.6 Conclusions

### Context

The relatively low house prices in the village had shaped the decisions of many of the interviewees to move to the village, and in some cases had enabled home-ownership for the first time. The village's rural location, as well as the reclamation of former open-cast mining sites nearby allowed easy access to countryside and green space.

### Enablers

The nature of the housing available allowed a number of interviewees to either run businesses or pursue hobbies in their garages. Easy access to green space and the rural environment allowed people to keep dogs and exercise them, take part in activities such as walking, and in one case grow food on an allotment.

### Constraints

Whilst one respondent was specifically unhappy with the anti-social behaviour of her neighbours, for others the problems they had getting things done, especially maintaining



gardens and undertaking minor home repairs was the significant issue. There was little use of the informal economy to get household repairs or improvements done, and establishing trust was an issue. It was suggested that local networks where people were able to call on other family members or contacts for help excluded some respondents. Transport and mobility were an issue in the village, and commuting to jobs outside the immediate vicinity was impossible for non-car owners. Most households with more than one adult had more than one car. Having the confidence to drive on motorways or long distances was also revealed as problematic for one respondent. A number of the respondents experienced real loneliness and isolation, and a lack of contact with and help from other family members.

## 8.0 Discussion

### 8.1 Introduction

Having outlined the key research findings in previous chapters, this chapter is intended to relate these findings to the study's research questions, and to relevant scholarship in the field. These three research questions have been outlined previously. They are:

1. What work strategies are used by households to meet their needs in a former mining village in Yorkshire?
2. Why are these work strategies adopted by households?
3. What can a study of these strategies add to existing studies of, and policy towards, household work strategies?

In discussing what strategies were adopted by the households, it is important to understand that for each of them their household strategy reflected a response in terms of individual and household agency to a specific set of circumstances at a stage in time. They were the product of individual and family history, social and economic geographies and wider developments in the economy and society at local and national level. Whilst they were all unique, some common features could be identified and these are used as

the basis of a simple exercise in categorisation. The tasks and elements varied, but it is important to recognise some had much greater weight than others.

Before considering these tasks and elements it is useful to refer back to the framework identified at Figure 3.1. This suggested relative weightings for tasks and task areas within household strategies, reflecting the focus of questions used in Pahl's original Sheppey questionnaire, re-used subsequently by Warde and Williams (Pahl, 1984; Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993; Williams, 2002; Williams & Windebank, 2000). In this framework issues such as housework, home maintenance and improvements, transport, gardening and care were all the subject of significant degrees of focus. However, whilst these issues all featured within the interviews with respondents, care in all its dimensions was the dominant issue. How this was balanced with other needs is a major question which needs consideration within the context of a discussion of the research's findings.

This chapter will outline the responses to the research questions in three separate sections. The first will describe the household strategies adopted by the respondents, the second will look at why these household strategies were adopted, and the final section will consider what the wider lessons are for scholarship and policy.

## **8.2 The Household Strategies**

### **8.2.1 Summary**

This section will consider the first research question - what kinds of strategies were used by the households. Different aspects of the household strategies have been outlined in previous chapters. This section will codify the different types of strategies by identifying common features that differentiate them from other types of strategy, as well as identifying shared factors which shape them to a greater or lesser extent. Seven types of household strategy are identified, and their defining characteristics outlined; and critical issues for households which lacked family support and useful local contacts are discussed. Key factors which applied for all of the household strategies are also identified.

### **8.2.2 Types of Household Strategy**

Table 8.1 outlines seven types of household strategy, identified by the nature of the different networks which respondents were able to call on to achieve these strategies. The term 'call on' is carefully chosen. These networks need to be seen largely as structures which existed and evolved, as opposed to being shaped by the active agency of the respondents. With families being the basis of most of this networking, they represent a set of relationships which were initially the product of personal attraction,

affection and reproduction, but which were subsequently called on to undertake and complete practical tasks. A degree of agency is present especially where friends, neighbours or professional contacts were involved, but these are primarily family networks deployed to undertake a range of work, reflecting patterns of household life which have been a feature of English village life for many centuries, as discussed by Pahl and Samuel (Pahl, 1984; Samuel, 1978; Samuel, Kitteringham, & Morgan, 1975).

Table 8.1: Types of Household Strategy

Type of Strategy	Adopters	Contacts	Nature of Contact	Geographical Scope	Activities
<b>Neighbour Support</b>	<i>Thomas and Abigail; Mark and Katie</i>	<i>Neighbours</i>	<i>Daily personal contact</i>	<i>Adjacent houses</i>	<i>Childcare, work contacts and networking</i>
<b>Family Network</b>	<i>Carole</i>	<i>Parents, children, family members, friends, friends of family members</i>	<i>Daily personal contact with other family members in village; less frequent personal and phone contact with family members beyond village</i>	<i>Locations within 20km radius</i>	<i>Childcare, care for older people, support to other family members with problems, home repairs and improvements</i>
<b>Family Support (living together)</b>	<i>Frank, Muriel</i>	<i>Parent, spouse, sibling</i>	<i>Daily personal contact and care for another household member</i>	<i>Within the home</i>	<i>Personal care, shopping, cooking, laundry, cleaning, domestic repairs</i>
<b>Family Support (living locally)</b>	<i>Sinead, Bryony, John and Karen</i>	<i>Parents, family</i>	<i>Frequent phone and personal contact</i>	<i>Locations within 10km radius</i>	<i>Childcare, domestic repairs, financial help, access to contacts</i>
<b>Involved Grandparents</b>	<i>Owen and Grace</i>	<i>Children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren</i>	<i>Daily phone contact, frequent personal contact</i>	<i>Locations within 100km radius</i>	<i>Childcare</i>
<b>Self-Reliance</b>	<i>Rosemary, David, Karl, Ewan</i>	<i>Family members, work/hobby-related contacts</i>	<i>Limited contact for specific purposes</i>	<i>Locations within region and beyond</i>	<i>Cooking, home repairs and improvements, hobbies, personal care, business opportunities</i>
<b>Coping Without</b>	<i>Betty, Lorna, Jennifer and Jordan, Gillian and Terry</i>	<i>Family members</i>	<i>Limited contact</i>	<i>Locations within 10km radius</i>	<i>Childcare, home repairs, gardening</i>

At least one other type of strategy could be added, outsourcing. Outsourcing of various kinds has grown significantly in importance across the economy as highlighted in earlier chapters. The literature review also highlighted the transfer of functions seen as ancillary in both private and public sector organisations, such as cleaning, catering, and

security, as a significant factor in the notional shift in employment between the manufacturing and the service sector in previous decades.

Outsourcing has not penetrated into the household realm to any degree, however. The expectation that opportunities for outsourcing in the domestic sphere would expand as households gained disposable income, but became more time-poor was widespread, but both the evidence gathered by Williams and Windebank in Sheffield (Williams et al., 2012; Windebank, 2010), as well as the views and experiences discussed by respondents in this research show that the progress of domestic outsourcing is very partial. Two households used extended warranties to maintain electrical goods, and one individual stated they used a British Gas service contract to cover a range of domestic maintenance functions including plumbing, in part because of previous poor experiences with local contractors. Otherwise its use was negligible. Therefore, as an approach, it was an aspect of some work strategies, but it did not define any of them. Those areas of activity where the literature identifies outsourcing as being most frequently used - cleaning, and care for children or vulnerable adults - were all done by the respondents, family members or neighbours.

The different strategic approaches are neither exhaustive, nor are they fixed. Instead, they represent an analytical framework, derived from interview texts which isolate a set of unifying features in a time and place: “*Contacts*”- the other people or households involved in the strategy; “*Nature of Contact*” - the frequency and type of communication with other people or households; “*Geographical Scope*” - how

widespread the geographical reach of this set of relationships was; and “*Activities*” - what practical work was done.

This represents a departure from some previous approaches to household strategies, particularly that of Pahl, which is focussed heavily on the household itself, rather than seeing households as the centre of a web of other relationships which also need to be described and understood (Pahl, 1984). Warde, although part of Pahl’s original research team on Sheppey, recognised that the Sheppey study did not look in detail at the nature of the relationships which delivered activities within household strategies, and in particular neglected the role of non-resident kin (Warde, 1990). The importance of kinship networks and family in household strategies has been reinforced by subsequent research which highlights the continuing importance of local family networks for those who have them (Batty & Flint, 2013; Cole, Batty, & Green, 2011) and Fletcher emphasises their importance in anchoring people to places, even where economic opportunities may be absent locally (Fletcher, 2009). Other researchers have also highlighted evidence that the decline of the importance in family relations has been overstated (Duncan & Smith, 2006).

Seven different types of strategy have been identified. The first, *Neighbour Support*, was deployed by two incoming owner-occupier households with no local connections, and limited contact with families in the North West and elsewhere in Yorkshire. This strategy was shaped by limited family contacts and the lack of proximity of relatives, which the households overcame because they developed a friendship and lived opposite each other.

Nevertheless for these two households, support from neighbours was a critical factor in shaping their strategies. Goods and services which could not be provided within the two households were obtained in the conventional economy. Services which these families would have found useful at various stages of their life-course were absent locally, particularly a childcare setting (either statutory or commercial) offering full day places.

The nature of this strategy highlights issues raised in the literature on neighbouring, neighbourhood belonging and social networks discussed in the literature review; as well as the work of Jarvis on work-life balance and commuting. Some of the issues raised in Elias's work on micro-sociality, as described in Chapter 2, are also pertinent; and all of these will be addressed in Section 8.3.

The second strategy type, the *Family Network*, was used by one owner-occupier household. This household had a family history in the locality, as well as other family members living in nearby towns. It was the only household which was able to call on these extensive family networks, the view was expressed by a number of other respondents that this pattern occurred widely in the village, although no other household of this type was interviewed. The strategy was shaped by these close family networks, with daily contact and daily support with a range of needs supported by bonding social capital.

The active agency of Carole, the key actor in the family network was also important in orchestrating and organising the delivery of the strategy; which she did through daily contact and conversation with other family members. This role of household organisation



has been identified in the literature on household strategies as one which is often gendered, falling overwhelmingly on women (Bryson, 2003; Erickson, 2005; Oakley, 1985; Seymour, 1992; Speakman & Marchington, 1999; Wallace, 2002) and which can be seen less as a conscious process and more as a set of embedded habits and behaviours. There was extensive use of family networks and contacts to obtain services, and the household had access to an allotment.

The third strategy type, *Family Support (Living Together)* was deployed by two social tenant households where the primary focus was on care for one family member with significant and limiting health conditions by another; and the primary contact was between these two people. In one case the household had some other contacts with other family members living locally, but in the other household, family members lived in the south of England. The focus of this strategy in both cases was almost entirely related to personal care, and tasks ancillary to this. Most goods and services which could not be undertaken or created by the household member offering care were obtained commercially in the conventional economy. This care for older people was often complex, and was described by those involved as always emotionally demanding.

The fourth type of strategy, *Family Support (Living Locally)*, applied for three households. In two cases the household was a single person, in the other case it was a couple with one child living at home. In the former cases, they were owner-occupiers, and in the latter case social tenants. There was frequent personal contact with other family members living locally, and some help with a number of tasks was given and

received. For example, both the single person households were able to call on other family members' networks of trusted tradespeople.

The single female households interviewed all highlighted the additional costs they faced, with these young women comparing their situation unfavourably to friends living as couples. There was also some reliance on outsourcing, particularly for the couple with one child living at home, whose electrical equipment was maintained and replaced on extended warranty, and the single female households used British Gas service contracts to cover heating and plumbing maintenance and repair. As highlighted in Chapter 2, De Ruijter et. al. identify trust issues in women's use of local traders, as well as the additional costs women faced (De Ruijter, Treas, & Cohen, 2005; De Ruijter & Van Der Lippe, 2007; De Ruijter, Van Der Lippe, & Raub, 2003). In all three cases most tasks were accomplished within the household, and other goods and services were obtained commercially within the conventional economy.

The fifth type of strategy, *Involved Grandparents*, applied for one owner-occupier household. There was daily contact between the grandparents involved and their children and grandchildren, with frequent contact in person. The children and grandchildren lived in a number of locations across Yorkshire. The strategy focussed entirely on support with childcare. Most other tasks were accomplished within the household, and goods and services were generally obtained within the conventional economy. In this context it needs to be recognised that whilst this household provided extensive support with childcare, none of the other households with school-aged children received support from grandparents. There were a number of reasons for this -

the age and ill-health of parents; estrangement and distance and family; and the particular demands of caring for children with special needs - issues already highlighted in Chapter 2; where McKie, Ward, and others have shown the dependence on grandparents in the UK childcare model (McKie et al., 2002; Ward et al., 2007; Gray, 2005; Hank & Buber, 2009; Innes & Scott, 2003; McDowell, 2005; Skinner, 2003; Wheelock & Jones, 2002).

The next kind of strategy, *Self-Reliance*, applied for four single-person households. Three were owner occupiers, and one was a private tenant. The households had access to skills and knowledge which helped them accomplish key tasks. Two of the owner-occupiers had refurbished and improved their houses extensively, and the other was engaged in this at the time of interview. Most of this work had been done by the individuals themselves, with some use of work contacts, services obtained commercially and family contacts in two cases, and services obtained through local informal contacts for the other.

The skills which they had also helped them get and keep employment. One individual supported two family members locally with care, but otherwise the notable feature of their networks was that they were not local, but spread across the region and beyond. The contested use of the term 'social capital' has already been discussed, along with other phenomena described by some scholars as 'capitals' such as cultural capital. The diverse nature of these networks and relationships, what they could provide, and what individuals could call on, show the limits of generalised terms such as social or cultural capital which do not describe the wide range of phenomena involved.

The final strategy type was Coping Without. This applied for four households, two retired single women and two couples with disabled children. Three were owner-occupiers, and one of the couples were social tenants. Their situations were such that although they had needs - support with care for children, or trusted and practical help with domestic repairs and garden maintenance - they could not find any substantial support to meet them, either in family or friendship networks, or in the conventional economy. All had family members living locally. The options they were left with necessitated a strategy in which they either attempted tasks themselves, or did not do them at all. For the single women, this limited their comfort in their own homes and gardens; and for the couples it meant that their care-work was largely unremitting. Two key issues for the study arise from these cases, which will be examined in turn.

### **8.2.3 Coping Without: The Critical Issues**

The first set of key issues are the factors behind what was essentially a market failure. Individuals with the resources to pay tradespeople were unable to find people locally they could trust; highlighting the limits of any effective market for the provision of outsourced domestic services. These are activities which the majority of households usually undertake themselves, where issues of opportunity cost are rarely addressed, and where standards and expectations about what a clean house or a well-maintained garden looks like are bound up with values which have been internalised within families over a number of generations.

Aspects of the question of trust and domestic outsourcing have already been discussed in relation to the *Family Support: Living Locally* households and whilst there has been relatively limited research in the UK context, as highlighted earlier it has been extensively examined in the Dutch context by Bargeman, De Ruijter and others (Bargeman & Knulst, 2003; De Ruijter, 2004; De Ruijter & Van Der Lippe, 2009; Esther De Ruijter & Van Der Lippe, 2007; De Ruijter et al., 2003). Their research, which used quantitative approaches was not able to undertake a granular analysis of the reasons people made choices, but did confirm the importance of trust as an issue as well as highlighting the importance of network embeddedness. It is also worth reiterating the conclusions of De Ruijter and Weesie regarding builders and their clients (De Ruijter & Weesie, 2007). Builders who knew those for whom they were working quoted lower prices and avoided cost-cutting approaches. Taking advantage of this is obviously predicated on having builders within a household's social network; which these respondents did not.

These conclusions are confirmed in UK research by Williams and others (Williams, Adom, Baric, & Ladan, 2011; Williams, Windebank, & Nadin, 2012; Windebank, 2010). As stated previously, they also highlighted trust and quality issues related to having others working in the home. They recognised that opting for self-provisioning and DIY was often forced on households because of market failure. This was definitely the case for a number of respondents, with individuals forced to undertake jobs themselves at some risk to their own safety; but the consequence of a generalised pattern of self-provisioning across the market was that paid-for services were rare.

The second issue raised by the cases of these households was the impact of care for others, in particular children on the autism spectrum. The lack of literature on the social and economic circumstances of families with autistic children has already been highlighted; with published literature focussing largely on the ways in which autism is manifested as a condition, with a lesser focus on its emotional impact and how parents manage it. This absence of a substantial scholarly consideration of the wider impacts of having autistic children on households and families, whilst surprising, reflects the professional focus of those undertaking the research, which is primarily from the perspectives of those researching learning disability and the education of young people on the autism spectrum. In turn, this raises questions about whether, in neglecting social and economic context, the literature on autistic children misses key issues for families.

The impact of caring for children is quite extensively discussed across the media, in the context of social policy and in academic literature, as are issues related to care for older people. They are, after all, part of most people's lived experience. In contrast the relatively limited numbers of households with children on the autism spectrum, as well as the wide variation in the nature of autism spectrum disorders, mean their impacts are not widely experienced or understood.

### **8.2.3 The Household Strategies: Key Factors**

Seven factors were significant across these strategies, and were present to a greater or lesser extent in each. They are: the length of time that individuals and households had

lived in the village; their waged and salaried employment; cash-in-hand working; the role of families; the work involved in consumption; care; and commuting.

### 8.2.3 (a.) Length of Time in The Village

None of the individuals interviewed had lived in the village all their lives, although the majority had been born in other towns and villages within a 10km radius. Whilst some had lived in the village for some time, only one respondent had been brought up in the village from infancy, and they had lived elsewhere for a lengthy period. Others had been born and brought up nearby, and moved in, either in their teens, later, when setting up a first household or starting a family, or in retirement. Whilst only one expressed any antagonism towards the village, all recognised a degree of distance and separation from the village because of the time they had lived elsewhere. This shaped the networks on which they were able to call for support.

### 8.2.3 (b.) Waged and Salaried Employment

For most of the respondents, their own salaried employment or waged labour (or someone else's) was the key element of their household strategies, which made all the other elements feasible. Even for those who were not in work, pension or benefit payments were what paid for food, fuel and utilities, with one exception where the individual was living off savings from previous employment. Strategies therefore had to support breadwinners through covering childcare, recognising the sometimes very

significant time commitment that employment or running a business could involve. Whilst some respondents were involved in different types of self-provisioning such as substituting DIY for the work of local builders, or growing fruit and vegetables on an allotment in one case, this was always a secondary element of work strategies, often undertaken for non-economic reasons such as self-fulfilment and personal interest, reinforcing the non-utility maximising motivations for modes of work discussed in the discussion of consumption in Chapter 2, as identified by White and Williams (White, 2006; Williams, 2008; Williams & Nadin, 2012; Williams, 2008a; Williams & Windebank, 2003).

### 8.2.3 (c.) Cash-in-Hand Working

With rare exceptions, cash-in-hand solutions were not part of the household strategies of any of the respondents. Cash-in-hand working may have been taking place in the village, and on a number of occasions the researcher identified activities such as car repair in gardens or minor building work which may have been carried out on this basis, but it was in networks of which the respondents were not generally a part. In the case of these households, this contradicts some of the published literature, which highlights a tendency for relatively more affluent households to pay for services such as household repairs and improvements on a cash-in-hand basis (Evans, Syrett, & Williams, 2006; Williams, 2004).



### 8.2.3 (d.) The Role of Families

For most of the respondents, families were the most significant supporting element in their household strategies. The role of others, such as friends and neighbours was generally limited. In most cases, where a household identified a task which needed to be done, or an unfulfilled need, resolving this was generally addressed with family members first, whether it was help to collect a parcel, provide transport to hospital, or assist with home repairs. Families supported others with childcare, care, transport and household repairs and improvements. Families also helped out others with money, and with other forms of practical and emotional support. The importance of families in household strategies has been identified in research from that of Pahl onwards (Pahl, 1984; Wallace, 2002; Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993). However there was little focus on what happened when there no solutions within a family, or where family did not exist. This research, on the other hand, explored the impact of the absence of family on a number of the respondents.

### 8.2.3. (e.) Consumption Work

It was clear that for many of the respondents both Glucksmann's identification of the growing importance of 'consumption work' and other changing aspects of consumption identified by Harvey et. al. described significant elements of their household strategies (Glucksmann, 2013; Harvey et al., 2001). Respondents discussed comparison shopping for cars, purchasing goods or services over the internet, domestic recycling, and building

self-assembly furniture as significant tasks for themselves and their households. It was also clear that the process imposed some burdens on them as consumers, especially the growth of internet-based shopping for products and services as diverse as holidays, home insurance, clothing or groceries. For the households interviewed, using the internet for these transactions was convenient, although it also needs to be stressed that with no nearby banks or travel agents, there was no real face-to-face alternative.

This was an issue for respondents, most obviously in relation to the delivery of internet shopping, where parcel collection for those who worked away from home during the day was an issue. Supermarket shopping was also identified as an additional task by most respondents, which necessitated access to a vehicle, as was budgeting and financial management in an era of internet banking, and the associated complexity presented by greater choice in savings and insurance products. It also needs to be stressed that without exception the respondents were digitally literate, and had access to the internet using home computers or smartphones, although as highlighted in Chapter 4, localities such as Ballyhenry are characterised by relatively higher levels of digital exclusion.

### 8.2.3 (f.) Care

Chapter 2 introduced some of the key literature on care, and it is worth recapitulating some of the key themes which arose. First was the view, advanced by Tronto, of the very

broad nature of care (Tronto, 1993), and the recognition of its impact in Arlie Hochschild's work on emotion work and emotion labour (Hochschild, 2015; Hochschild, 2012). Underlying this was a second theme, the question of whether utility maximisation or altruism motivated the decision to care with the work of Becker (Becker, 1981) counterposed to that of Tronto (*ibid*), and McKie and McDowell (McDowell, Ray, Perrons, Fagan, & Ward, 2005; McKie et al., 2002). The scholarship of McDowell and McKie develops this view of care as an activity choice driven by altruism and duty, and highlight both how care generally devolves to women, as well as the importance of family and friendship networks in sustaining this. Their work also highlights the crucial question of space, with McKie and others identifying caringscapes as a means of understanding the constructs of time and space which shaped care (McKie et al., 2002; Raw & McKie, 2020); a concept which has continuing and universal relevance (Bowlby, 2011, 2012; Edwards, 2019; Sihto, 2018, 2019).

This concept of the *caringscape* was a particularly useful one in this study, and helped in understanding the wide range of issues faced by respondents; in particular the impact of geography. This impact was important for some of the respondents, and also highlights assumptions in care policy that are spatially blind, for example that as well as being willing and able to offer care, families live in the kind of close proximity that enables this.

For the respondents, care was the element which presented most difficulty in the majority of household strategies. Whilst other tasks demanded planning, time, and

effort on the part of households, and the inability to arrange them could present significant problems, care presented problems of a different order. This encompassed both the practical impacts, as well as the emotional work involved. Whilst care was emotionally rewarding in a number of cases, it was often physically and emotionally draining; and in some cases deeply distressing for the carers involved. Aspects of care have already been discussed in the review of literature, and the importance and centrality of care in most of the respondents' work strategies is a departure from the findings of previous studies.

### 8.2.3 (g.) Commuting

Finally, as outlined in previous chapters, whilst two respondents worked from home, and two worked in the village, the majority of respondents in employment were commuters, and in some cases working for sustained periods away from home. This had a major impact on their households and their work strategies, in terms of time, effort and expense; and also meant that they had to forgo other activities in the household. Commuting is not widely recognised as a discrete issue within the literature on household work strategies - Pahl's Sheppey research was shaped heavily by Sheppey's island location, with paid employment concentrated overwhelmingly in unskilled and semi-skilled manual work relatively close to respondent's homes, and its relative blindness to questions of space has shaped subsequent approaches. Whilst Warde's work in the North-West hinted at commuting as a sub-text (Warde, 1990), other research, overwhelmingly concentrated on socially and economically isolated deprived

communities, did not factor in the impact of commuting because it was not there (MacDonald, 1994; Williams, 2004; Williams & Windebank, 2001; Williams, 2004). Only Jarvis, in studies of households in London and the US West Coast, highlights the importance of commuting in particular, and spatial issues in general, for household work strategies (Jarvis, 2005b, 2005a).

To conclude, this section has identified seven types of household strategies used by the respondents, and has outlined factors which operate across these seven typologies to greater and lesser extents. The strategies described represent a response at a stage in time to a wide range of spatial, temporal, social and economic factors. These factors, which both shape the strategies adopted by households through the force of structure, and are in turn shaped by the households through their own agency, are complex and sophisticated, nuanced and granular. Why they are adopted by households will be discussed in the next section.

## **8.3 Why are these strategies adopted by households?**

### **8.3.1 Introduction**

This section will consider the reasons why the households adopted particular types strategy, or why those strategies were forced on them. Before discussing this in greater

detail it is important to consider a number of underlying issues related to the wider academic literature which helps place questions of structure and agency in context; and this literature is outlined and key themes identified.

The households and their strategies are then examined, with a discussion of how they defined the concept of 'getting by', and what their strategies had as their objectives. The social, economic, spatial and temporal factors which shaped these strategies are then outlined.

### **8.3.2 The Context of the Household Strategies**

Understanding context necessarily draws on a wide range of literature. Whilst, following Fine and Hodgson (Fine, 2001; Hodgson, 2015), reservations about the use of the term 'social capital' have already been presented, it is difficult to ignore it, given the relatively unchallenged ease with which it has entered both academic and political debates, although in academic debates there are at least some countervailing views. As outlined previously, much of the social capital literature has focussed on phenomena which constitute different elements of household strategies (Halpern, 2005; Kearns, 2004; Matthews & Besemer, 2017; Parkes, Kearns, & Atkinson, 2002; Pichler & Wallace, 2009; Putnam, 2000; Wallace & Pichler, 2007; Williams, 2003). What is generally described as 'bridging' social capital (largely non-familial links beyond the locality) was predominant amongst the respondents and helps explain the difficulties they often had

in gaining access to practical support at a local level. However, to state that Household A were able to access employment opportunities because their bridging social capital gave them contacts beyond the locality, or Household B were able to support an elderly relative in their own home because of the bonding social capital of a proximate family is to engage in oversimplification. A different and more nuanced vocabulary, that encompasses the range of phenomena that shape the networks of households and individuals - class, economics, geography, time, power, trust, life-courses, friendship, family and work - would be both more accurate and more useful than the shorthand term 'social capital', but developing that vocabulary is outwith the aims of this research and the scope of this thesis.

The literature on life courses and ageing has already been outlined in Chapter 2 (Gilleard & Higgs, 2016; Humphrey, 1993; Tarrant, 2010) and illuminates changes in the nature and impact of the ageing process in recent decades. People are generally living longer, and advances in medical science have improved many aspects of those lives. At the same time growth in the proportion of the older people in the population has imposed new burdens on individuals, families and households. This needs to be seen in the context of the discussions of care, and the employment problems within the sector (Age UK, 2014; Armstrong & Armstrong, 2005; Dujardin et al., 2011; Graham, 1991; León et al., 2005; Lyon & Glucksmann, 2008). The responsibility to care for elderly relatives rather than rely on outsourcing of domiciliary care or public or private residential provision is embedded in many communities, and was the cultural norm for the respondents. This did not necessarily extend to childcare, and as has already been

highlighted, the very special needs of some children effectively nullified this cultural obligation.

Care shifted away from institutional models after the Griffiths Report of 1988, and parallel developments occurred in education after the Warnock report in 1978. Whilst some political and academic debate at the time placed this in the context of the Thatcher Government's public spending cuts and privatisation, this was and is an oversimplification. Rather, the policy thrust reflected concern amongst professionals and advocacy organisations that institutional provision both failed to meet the needs of service users, removed them from society, did not allow choice and autonomy, and stifled human potential.

The long-term consequences of these policy changes had significant impacts on a number of the respondents; and this research showed the continuing importance of these changes, as well as the continuing impacts of unresolved conflicts over rights and resources (Wanless, 2006). It was clear that responsibilities for care were devolved largely onto families. Community and voluntary sector infrastructure remained weak, and initiatives developed under New Labour, through programmes such as the Health Action Zones and SureStart described by Bauld et. al. (Bauld, Mackinnon, & Judge, 2002) and the incorporation into mainstream programmes and activity was patchy in the extreme.



It was also obvious that changing work patterns and the search for work-life balance formed an important part of the context within which these households operated, and literature on this area discussed in Chapter 2 helped in understanding this (Dex, 2003; Gregory & Milner, 2011; Lawton, 2009; Ray, Hoggart, Vegeris, & Taylor, 2010). However, it was also clear that the research base is partial and incomplete. The study of working lives in contemporary Northern England needs to revisit the scholarship of authors like Siegfried Kracauer or Norbert Elias and apply their approaches to the stories of working lives in 21<sup>st</sup> Century Yorkshire; taking care to avoid glib theorisations and, like Kracauer, letting the data speak. Those individuals who worked generally had complex working lives, which were characterised by non-standard working patterns and sometimes lengthy commutes to locations well beyond the village. This reinforces the view that long-distance commuting in the UK has increased significantly in recent decades, particularly for individuals moving to rural locations from cities, as shown by quantitative researchers in the field (Champion, 2009; Champion & Coombes, 2012; Champion, Coombes, & Brown, 2009; Green, Hogarth, & Shackleton, 1999).

For most of the households, their location was sub-optimal. The choice had been shaped by their need to balance migration and commuting, and was in turn shaped by the interaction of housing markets and the land-use planning process at particular stages in time. This happens because of pressures in the planning system to restrict residential development (Cheshire, 2009; Cheshire, Hilber, & Koster, 2018; Hilber & Vermeulen, 2014; Matthews et al., 2015).

These pressures operate to make housing options near larger cities in the region less affordable, and shaped the individual household choices to move to the village. This decision was time sensitive. Had one couple started their relationship ten years earlier, they could have afforded a home in a Pennine city closer to the female partner's sisters, obviating many of their childcare problems. In turn, opportunities were created by a local housing market which was failing, and affected by low demand even for socially-rented housing in the years after the collapse of the mining industry. These opportunities were enhanced by a set of local land-releases and housing developments from the late-1990's onwards which anticipated, and then complemented the Labour Government's Housing Market Renewal programme.

Whilst most of the investment was in nearby communities in South Yorkshire, there was also some complementary investment locally. Crucially, the programme engendered greater developer interest in the area, with two sets of respondents living in homes built during the Pathfinder programme. However, as highlighted previously, the post-2007 recession slowed the pace of development, and were followed by the abrupt halt to the programme ordered by the Coalition Government in 2011, removing the interventions which had been in place to foster renewal (Cole, 2015; Cole & Pearce, 2009; Ferrari, 2007, 2018; Leather, Nevin, Cole, & Eadson, 2012).

As implemented in South Yorkshire, the Housing Market Renewal pathfinder was strongly aligned to regional and local economic strategies; and could be clearly seen as addressing the wider diagnosis of problems within the economy of the Yorkshire Coalfield discussed by Newby and Poulter, within a suite of other UK and EU policies and

programmes (Newby & Poulter, 2009). This context of regional co-ordination and complimentary evidence-based policies and programmes was designed to address the long term problems of older industrial regions in the UK described by a range of researchers (Birch, MacKinnon, & Cumbers, 2010; Fothergill, 2001; Haughton & Trinniman, 2005; Hudson, 2005; Porter, 2004); but was removed by the Coalition Government.

The problems identified by Newby and Poulter remain - the lack of higher order settlements; poor connectivity; skills deficits; and the long-term problems posed by dependence on sectors such as logistics and call-centres. They are compounded by a culture of limited aspirations - of education, training and ambitions for entrepreneurship. That assessment is supported by wider scholarship, with Gore and others highlighting the limited spatial horizons of many local residents in terms of employment aspirations (Gore et al., 2007; Gore & Hollywood, 2009) , and Lawless et. al. questioning the realism of some policy prescriptions (Lawless, Overman, & Tyler, 2011).

The Housing Market Renewal pathfinders were envisaged as a multi-decade intervention to integrate areas such as the Yorkshire Coalfield into wider regional economies, but with that programme truncated, the interventions which could have addressed some of the difficulties which respondents experienced in terms of access to services, as well as the lack of vibrancy in the local economy were not addressed. In this context, it is also important to note that the absence of regional governance, in particular as it applies to economic development; but also in the planning of health and education limits the scope

to respond to economic change and economic shocks as was possible under New Labour (Henderson & Shutt, 2004).

### 8.3.3 The Households and their Strategies

Households had different views about the relative effectiveness of the strategies they choose or were forced to use. In this context, the households were all asked to comment on whether they were 'getting-by' and what this meant for them. Some were more positive about their circumstances than others. In this connection the schema developed by Lister in the context of her work on poverty offers a useful means of understanding this (Lister, 2004, P130)

Figure 8.1: Forms of Agency (After Lister, 2004, P130)



Whilst some respondents felt positive about their circumstances, and that they were in control of their lives and exercising agency, others did not. There was no clear connection between a household's financial circumstances and where they fitted on Lister's quadrant. For all those interviewed, getting by was about more than money, in particular wider quality of life issues were crucial. In different ways they saw getting by as being able to live comfortably, and in every case relatively modestly, but being free from major anxieties and crises.

However, within this, for the respondents, getting by had a wide range of differing elements. These components included

- *not having worries, and having a positive outlook on life*
- *maintaining a balance between work and home*
- *fulfilling the expectations of, and duties to others, in particular other family members*
- *being socially engaged, and not alone*
- *helping others deal with emotional challenges*
- *being able to manage money, avoid unnecessary expenditure, and think in terms of current specifics rather than ungrounded aspirations*
- *having skills and networks to secure employment and income*
- *being able to undertake the practical aspects of running a household, or having access to trusted help to do it*
- *being able to deal with the extra costs and impacts of not having a partner*

- *looking after pets properly*

Getting by, then, was not a simple question of economic calculus and utility maximisation. To get by in these different ways, the households used various constantly-evolving strategies, which represented a dynamic interaction between structure (unemployment as a result of changes in the retail motor trade, for example) and agency (the decision to return to education). These strategies embody processes of integration, negotiation, reconciliation and frequently resignation, and describing this is an important contribution of this study to knowledge in the field.

#### **8.3.4 Social Factors**

Whilst economic, spatial and temporal factors were important in shaping households' strategies and will be dealt with in the next sub-sections, social factors were perhaps the most important in shaping these strategies; and actively addressing a lack of local contacts and connections was one of the areas in which a number of household members exercised agency. Some respondents had also developed social networks well beyond the village primarily around work, but also around recreational and cultural activities. In turn, many of the respondents recognised that they were relatively socially isolated within the village, and the fact that they were mostly incomers, and they felt themselves perceived as such by local people.

Undoubtedly, considered as a whole, the respondents were different to most village residents. In a village where just under 40% of people had no qualifications whatsoever, and where the numbers of people with Level 4 qualifications and above were below both levels across the district and nationally as discussed in Chapter 4, twelve households out of the seventeen interviewed had at least one member educated to Level 4 or above, four had postgraduate qualifications, and a further respondent was working towards a postgraduate qualification at the time of interview.

This was mirrored in the social classifications of the respondents, with eleven of the households in social classes A, B or C1, in a village where almost 70% of the population were in social classes C2, D and E. However, whilst it could be argued this constitutes a middle-class group of respondents, viewed in more Marxian terms this is questionable. Whilst a number of respondents were self-employed, the fact that they were not employees reflected patterns in their business sectors, where freelance employment was prevalent, and the majority of those in work were in waged or salaried employment. Almost all of those who were not retired described precariousness in their working lives, none had substantial savings or investments, and none owned property other than their own homes. They were households, in other words, from whom surplus value was extracted.

In the interviews a number of respondents clearly described this difference, and a sense of being isolated from prevailing patterns and networks because of it. Others implied it in how they described their social networks and contacts, even at the level of dog-

walking, where one respondent described the different attitudes and values of local people who owned large and aggressive types of dog. This conclusion is borne out in published research, which suggests that owners of these breeds have more psychotic tendencies than those who own less aggressive breeds (Wells & Hepper, 2012). Others identified difference in terms of distinct and more demanding and esoteric leisure activities, such as extensive foreign travel, motor-sport and boat-ownership.

This difference was compounded in many cases by limited local family ties. There was a difference in the nature of family interactions for the respondents with family members living in the village and those without, even where the comparison was with respondents living within five or ten kilometres. For them, contact had to be planned, arranged and have a purpose, as opposed to being a matter of daily routine, habit and custom. Whilst only one respondent had an extensive local family network, it was recognised by most of the respondents that family networks of this nature were widespread in the village, which can be confirmed by the researcher from their experience in this and many other mining villages, including the one where he lives.

For other respondents their lack of local family contacts limited access to others who could help with issues such as childcare. At a more basic level, their working patterns also isolated these households. The consequence of significant numbers of grandparents able to pick children up from school was that, for those who did not have them, there was a complete absence of local childcare settings or after-school facilities. On this, as



on many other issues, such as health provision or care for older people, policy assumes family proximity.

At the same time, over half the respondents described more geographically extensive social networks, which whilst of limited value for day-to-day issues such as care or domestic support, helped individuals secure work, develop careers and pursue a range of social and recreational interests. In turn, the nature of the social networks to which individuals and households had access shaped their strategies. It could be argued that here the shorthand differentiation between bridging and bonding social capital might have some value as an explanation, but other factors such as family history and personal circumstances are equally important.

Most of the respondents did not have access to friends or family members who could help with basic tasks such as property repairs, electrical work, or garden maintenance. They either did it themselves, paid someone to do it (generally in the conventional economy, and on-the-books), or the work was not done. However, in a number of cases they described feeling that an informal economy existed in the village to which they, as incomers, or individuals without large family networks did not have access.

In turn, it could be argued that the existence of this informal economy, based largely on the kind of friendship and kinship networks to which some respondents had access shaped the availability of services in the local economy. Perhaps the clearest example of this was in the area of childcare. Respondents were aware that many local children were looked after by grandparents. As already described, the literature highlights preferences

in working-class communities for childcare and care within the family, even where childcare is available in other settings at minimal cost (Bradley, Hakim, Price, & Mitchell, 2008; Dex, 2003; Scott, Campbell, & Brown, 2001; Skinner, 2003; Wheelock & Jones, 2002).

The initial research was on household strategies, and the set of relationships within and beyond households that helped them get things done. As the interviews proceeded however, it became clear that for a number of the respondents, neither family nor neighbours and community figured in their household strategies. This research did not set out to look at relations between incomers and local people, but the theme emerged, unprompted, from a number of interviews. For almost all the respondents local networks based on kinship or long-standing connections did not include them. Whilst only one respondent expressed animus towards the village, the inability to call on local networks or connections was implicit in many discussions.

Parts of community life were closed to outsiders. This is borne out by the researcher's experience in the locality, as well as in the wider literature (Dennis, Henriques, & Slaughter, 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992). Making connections depended on introductions through trusted individuals, ideally people who shared the language, culture and history of those in local networks. This culture of connection, acting both through structure and agency has been identified in a wide range of contexts. In a study of the Chicago Democratic machine in the Daley era (Rakove, 1979) , a ward captain's remark to an idealistic young would-be volunteer is the book's title:

*'We don't want nobody nobody sent'*

For the respondents, their problem was that they were people *nobody* had sent. Whilst no-one interviewed described the kind of exclusionary practices discussed in Norbert Elias's Leicester research, some of the respondents (even one of those born and brought up locally) did feel a sense of difference because they were not part of an extended family in the way that many local people were. Their decisions to move away from where they were born and brought up meant the networks they had were different, and whether they chose it or not, the elective belonging described by Savage and discussed in Chapter 2 was at work (Bagnall, Longhurst, & Savage, 2003; Savage, 2008; Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2001; Savage, Bagnall, & Longhurst, 2004). Whilst some of the respondents might have a 'primordial attachment to place' described by Savage it was not generally to Ballyhenry. Most of the respondents had family, professional or social networks beyond the village, and had attachments elsewhere. The 'selective belonging' described by Watt was less apparent (Watt, 2009), with a number of the respondents making strenuous efforts to integrate locally - although it was also clear that that integration went no further than the public sphere of campaigns around the local SureStart centre, or on environmental issues, and did not stretch into the sphere of local families and their interconnections.

Here, what Elias describes as the processes of micro-sociality which include or exclude from a dominant local culture were at work. In the researcher's experience, language

and its use is a critical aspect of that. Aspects of what is a strongly differentiated local dialect have already been discussed, and in the interviews only two sets of respondents used the local vernacular second person singular '*thee*' and '*tha*' in the interviews (Carole; and Jordan and Jennifer), but they were the three respondents who had been born locally, who had lived in the vicinity all their lives, and had not left to go to University. Language, and the way that it is used were class-based, and whilst the richness of the local dialect highlights the limitations of Bernstein's classifications of 'restricted' and 'elaborated' codes (Bernstein, 1971), it contributes to the strong class-based place identity described by Robertson in relation to Stirling (Robertson, 2013). Wakefield or Ossett may be less than ten miles away, but even in 21<sup>st</sup> Century England, the local dialect in Ballyhenry is far-removed from their Heavy Woollen-influenced speech - still less the completely different speech patterns of Leeds, Sheffield or Rotherham.

### **8.3.5 Economic Factors**

Whilst household work strategies need to be seen as encompassing activities beyond the purely economic, it is important to recognise that they are shaped by individual economic circumstances and wider developments in the regional and national economy, as well as the active agency of individuals and households. It also needs to be recognised that despite authors such as Williams and Windebank (Williams & Windebank, 2005) identifying a range of approaches to economic activity which include informality as a significant element of household strategies, for this set of seventeen households waged and salaried employment was key in meeting the household costs in ten of them,

with the other seven households reliant either on working-age benefits (primarily carers allowance) or occupational and state pensions. Only one respondent was formally unemployed at the time of interview, although the individual was not claiming benefits because of residual savings and redundancy payments from their previous job. This represents a slight divergence from economic activity levels in the wider village population, with fewer economically inactive individuals, and higher levels of full-time employment and self-employment.

Whilst there was some limited use of services on a cash-in-hand basis by a two individuals, and there was significant self-provisioning by individuals and households which had access to relevant skills and resources, no individual undertook work on a cash-in-hand basis. This was for a number of reasons. Even where individuals worked on a self-employed basis, the nature of the clients for whom they worked meant that all work was procured, undertaken and paid-for formally. These were large media companies, statutory sector organisations, and in the case of the one respondent who undertook work for private individuals, payment was by electronic means, though PayPal which meant that a formal record existed.

This also reflects wider developments in advanced economies such as that of the UK, with opportunities for off-the-books working reducing in fields such as construction, and the greater use of facilities management contractors for building maintenance work. The requirement for workers on construction sites to have CSCS<sup>45</sup> cards which record their

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<sup>45</sup> Construction Skills Certification Scheme

skills has already been highlighted. Although labour-only subcontracting remains a feature of the sector, this is paid for through formal on-the-books arrangements.

Facilities management approaches, as well as the use of agency employment has also reduced the opportunities for cash-in-hand working in other sectors. Key areas where such opportunities used to exist have been progressively reduced. MacDonald, writing in 1994, identifies cash-in-hand working in a number of sectors, particular cleaning in industrial premises such as steelworks where individuals were recruited through word-of-mouth to do this work during plant shut-down periods (MacDonald, 1994). With the much wider use of electronic payments to sub-contractors, as well as the more stringent requirements of insurance companies, companies are less likely to take these approaches.

What was notable was the changing nature of working life. In seventeen households, four men worked a set working week on a salaried or waged basis for one employer; the other three men in full-time work combined self-employment, with work on a freelance basis in a number of roles for a number of employers. Six of the women, on the other hand, worked a set working week for one employer, with only one undertaking agency work on casual basis. This partly reflected the conscious choices to pursue less stressful and more fulfilling work identified in Chapter 5, but also reflected changing opportunities in the respective economic sectors. Pluralisation in broadcast media production has been identified as forcing casualisation and insecurity in the media industry (Dwyer, 2015; Hardy, 2012; Hesmondhalgh & Baker, 2010; Paterson, 2001), but

in the case of one male respondent this had offered the scope to pursue a second portfolio career in media production (Platman, 2003). In the case of another male respondent, the growth of internet-based trading platforms such as E-Bay had allowed him to develop his own craft business dealing with customers remotely.

It is also important to note that in most cases the choices made reflected values and life experience. Considered as a group the individuals and households saw work-life balance as a priority, and whilst a number were keen to develop their careers, there was a universal commitment to not pursuing that at the expense of families, caring responsibilities, hobbies or personal fulfilment. It was also clear that across the group, there was a prudent approach to financial management and budgeting, with few respondents reporting heavy borrowing, other than mortgages on property.

Nevertheless a number of households identified themselves as financially vulnerable, with low levels of savings to meet unforeseen eventualities. A number of respondents helped out other family members financially, and others were helped by family members with major items. Respondents on benefits did not report any significant financial problems, with most clear that they were budgeting carefully and had relatively few outgoings. What was also clear was that in some key respects, the local market was failing to respond to some of the respondents needs for services - particularly in terms of property maintenance and repairs, and childcare.

### 8.3.6 Spatial Factors

The three most important shaping factors were the village's location relative to employment; its location in relation to respondents' other family members, and the availability of housing. Other spatial factors, such as the village environment and its proximity to open space, shaped strategies and were valued by respondents, but did not shape the choice to live there.

Choices regarding residential location were shaped by household strategies, and in turn shaped them; and the relative importance of structure and agency is both uncertain and difficult to unpick. At the macro level of planning and housing policy it could be argued that all the respondents were victims of structure. The nature of the UK's planning system means that the housing market in the UK does not operate as a free market in any sense. None of the the usual requirements of a free market apply, with significant barriers to entry for new providers, access to information that is neither fair nor equal, significant interference from external actors (both state and non-state), and supply that is largely unresponsive to pricing signals. The levels of consumer choice which apply in the market for cars, for example, do not apply. Even with access to financial resources, people cannot choose where or how they want to live.

Over the past four decades, choices have narrowed in housing. The Thatcher government's Right-To-Buy policies did much to remove public rented housing as a



choice, and changes to the planning system introduced under the Major Government which strengthened the ability of local authorities to resist new housebuilding for sale have in turn empowered local lobbying against new housing. In South and West Yorkshire over the past three decades, the key effect of this was to constrain housing development in popular locations around the major cities of the region, particularly on their western and northern Pennine fringes.

Obviously, this change over time affected respondents differently, with the couple who moved to the village in the 1960's able to afford a detached home with a large garden in the village on a teachers salary and commute easily to jobs nearby. For those who moved to the village more recently, the location was sub-optimal and reflected a trade-off between convenience and affordability; with other locations closer to motorways and employment discounted because of their higher prices. This situation was compounded by the poor local rail services discussed in Chapters 2 and 4, which limited access to city-centre employment elsewhere in the region for local residents, as well as to a wider range of local facilities.

For various reasons, such as caring responsibilities or the need for practical and emotional support from parents or other family members, for other respondents the village met their needs; and in this it could be argued that they had a degree of agency. However, for all the residents the relatively isolated location of the village presented problems in terms of access to services and amenities. In the historical experience of other coalfields in Scotland and Durham, there was a conscious decision to

abandon some smaller settlements after the end of mining, notably including Glenbuck in Ayrshire, the birthplace of the late Liverpool manager, Bill Shankly. Following resistance during the restructuring of the Durham coalfield in the 1960's, this process was abandoned; however the question remains how relatively isolated communities designed to serve the needs of one industry become genuinely vibrant after the industry disappears.

One of the more unexpected aspects of many of the household strategies was the importance given by respondents to their pet ownership; and for some of the respondents owning and looking after pets was a central part of their lives. Seven of the households had pets of various types, including dogs, cats, horses and chickens. This was a finding which had not been reflected in the initial reading across the literature; with no substantial discussion of pet ownership across the material reviewed in the fields of housing, planning, economic development, household strategies, or poverty and social exclusion. After fieldwork was concluded, a further review of the literature was undertaken, and as well as published material in the health field, the researcher was able to draw on the research of the thesis of another researcher, Colleen Rowan whose research focussed on the community impacts of two estate regeneration schemes in the West of Scotland (Rowan, 2015). Rowan highlighted the social role of dog-ownership and dog-walking in communities, and in this research it was clear that dog-walking promoted social integration.

Both Rowan's respondents and those in the current study reported that pet-ownership had positive benefits for mental health; and it was also clear that for all the dog-owners

interviewed exercising their dogs had a positive impact on activity levels and general health. This reinforces the conclusions of a substantial body of literature from across the health field, already discussed in the literature review (Black, 2012; Cloutier & Peetz, 2016; McNicholas, 2014; McNicholas et al., 2005; Rijken & Van Beek, 2016; Stanley, Conwell, Bowen, & Van Orden, 2014; Utz, 2014; Wisdom, Saedi, & Green, 2009; Wood et al., 2017).

In turn this raises further questions for both scholarship and policy. Why is Rowan's discussion of issues related to pet-ownership the only substantial one in the UK planning and housing literature, and in turn where is the recognition of pet-ownership in planning and housing policy? Other than the place of dangerous dogs and excessive cat-ownership in the spectrum of anti-social and nuisance behaviour, the fact that millions of households have domestic pets barely figures in planning guidance or the policies of Registered Social Landlords (RSL's), or in the academic literature.

To summarise, household decisions about where to live were shaped by a number of factors, and for most of the households this involved in balancing a number of factors - housing costs and availability, proximity to work and proximity to family - with some factors exercising a greater degree of pull than others. The degrees of pull varied between respondents. Interestingly a significant number of respondents had little or no knowledge of the village before they moved, and no-one cited existing friendship or social networks as a factor in the decision. In addition, no one cited local institutions or local facilities as a factor, and this may have further relevance that will be discussed later.

It follows that the spatial choices that respondents made shaped their work strategies, in significant ways. Whilst the rural location offered cheap housing and outdoor leisure opportunities, it also shaped household strategies negatively, particularly in the extra time family members spent commuting, and in the difficulties they had accessing competitive retail facilities nearby. Respondents' work strategies varied widely, and the village and its location had impacts on all of them, both positive and negative. As such, this confirms existing literature that challenges current approaches to planning for the location of housing; as well as highlighting that the critical analysis advanced by scholars such as Cheshire which focus on London and the South East also apply elsewhere in England (Cheshire, 2009).

At one extreme there was the one non-driving respondent, whose strategy was largely shaped around the needs of members of her family living locally. The kind of dense and spatially bounded family network on which she could call was the strongest example of bonding social capital amongst the case study participants, and the resonance of this case with the kind of close working-class family network discussed by authors such as Young has already been highlighted in the literature review (Dennis et al., 1969; Phillipson et al., 2001; Young & Willmott, 1957). This respondent's position was also helped by having a job locally, which helped allow a daily routine of family visits, phone calls and family social contacts to take place. In turn this facilitated mutual support with caring across the family, as well as practical help with various tasks. Whilst this kind of strongly spatially embedded family network is the kind of network which is

assumed in mining communities, for the respondents in this study this pattern was not typical, with only one other set of respondents (the Active Grandparents) having this level of family connection, albeit over a much wider geographical area.

In both these cases, their degree of family connectedness was regarded as a given, and the acts of family connection were embedded in daily routines, less as conscious and planned individual case-by-case choices, and more as habits as discussed by institutionalist and evolutionary scholars such as Hodgson (Hodgson, 2004; Hodgson & Knudsen, 2012). For many of the others interviewed, family connections were relatively unimportant, and limited to occasional visits and phone calls, even for respondents with family living locally. These connections were more the performance of quasi-ritual observance and duties, rather than than driven by either feelings or needs.

At the other extreme were the Neighbour Support households. Whilst they were positive about living in the village, they could have lived similar lives in a wide range of other locations across the region. They would have had the same difficulties in access to work, but might have had better access to key services such as retail, and wider choices in terms of education and childcare. It is worth noting that the village had no providers of paid-for childcare, and out of school provision in the statutory sector was limited. The land-use planning system can release land for the development of new housing for relatively affluent commuters, but it cannot ordain a market response to the needs of these new residents, as was evidenced by the dependence of one couple on a childminder in a more affluent village five miles away. Whilst the village had

advantages as a location, allowing some respondents to exercise choices about how they spent time, in particular on leisure activities such as keeping a pony or other pets, and dog-walking, it also had its disadvantages.

It is also important to note that most of the respondents had a family history in Yorkshire, and had only moved long distances in a few cases; and for virtually all the respondents the prime consideration was housing availability and price rather than location. This in turn shaped outcomes in terms of other choices which were sub-optimal. A number of the respondents recognised the advantages of city living, or living in a more urban setting in terms of access to culture and entertainment, and greater choice and access to services such as education and childcare, but rising house prices and the impact of restrictions in housing supply in more urban locations elsewhere in the region had priced respondents out of those markets.

### **8.3.7 Temporal Factors**

Whilst the households interviewed had some things in common, in most respects they diverged. In terms of work, family history, and the stages at which households and the individuals within them were at in terms of their life courses they were very different. Just as geography shaped respondents' household strategies, they were also shaped by time, with people describing things that they no longer did, or were no longer able to

do. Others also reported that changes over time had made some things easier. Whilst changes wrought through time exercised structural force and restraint on household strategies, individuals also exercised agency to re-shape their household strategies over time.

Most notably this manifested itself in the choices made in three households to change careers, with one individual returning to learning and reinventing himself as an individual in a professional field in his forties. Two other respondents at the same stage in their lives also opted to make major career changes and move into self-employment. Whilst both respondents had ambitions in terms of work, and saw their work as a source of satisfaction and fulfilment, their household strategies reflected a conscious choice to balance work with other aspects of their lives, as well as choosing work which was fulfilling and personally rewarding, rather than pursuing purely financial rewards. In two households, teenage daughters had developed the life-skills to cook for themselves, go to school on their own and live with a degree of independence.

A further respondent had met, and married, a new partner in her forties and was in the process of integrating their two families. Undoubtedly, although she described problems along the way, the relationship was a fulfilling and important one in her life. Both partners had experienced significant adversity in their previous lives - divorce, unemployment and poverty for the woman, bereavement for the man. The couple's initial meeting had been unplanned, and had happened because of a shared membership of a social group, but both partners had subsequently worked to develop their

relationship and they had made the decision to live together. This in turn had created a situation where they were able to pool resources, reducing their living costs, and with a two-person household they had more time and were able to take part in more activities, in particular taking on a allotment garden together and growing their own food. Their changing circumstances were the product of both structure and agency, as well as serendipity. For this couple, as for a number of the other couples interviewed, meeting the right person and starting a relationship with them was their most important life-event, and shaped every other aspect of their lives.

For a number of the households, there had also been a conscious choice about when to make major life-changes. One woman had chosen to have her first child in her late thirties; when her older siblings had opted to have theirs in their twenties. Whilst she had supported her siblings with childcare during her teens, her siblings were now at a different stage in their lives and were unable and unwilling to support her. The distance between her location and where her siblings lived may also have been a factor, as they had got on their local housing ladder at an earlier stage in a neighbouring local authority area, where the planning regime now restricted supply and affordability. This was compounded by her partner's situation, with an elderly father with serious health problems of his own and a step-mother whom he felt had no maternal instincts. For both the Neighbour Support households, who had chosen to have children relatively later in their lives than many of those who lived around them, this decision may have had some impact on their potential to create networks with others with young children.



This was in contrast to the case of the Involved Grandparents, who had supported all of their children actively with childcare. The other factors which meant that this couple could be so involved - income, car ownership, and the time available because of their retirement - are described elsewhere, but the fact that the birth and early lives of their grandchildren coincided with the early stages of their retirements in their early sixties was also critical. At the time of the interview they were in their seventies, and were clear that they would have been unable to support their children with childcare to the degree that they had done ten years earlier.

The other major area in which the temporal dimension had an impact was in terms of caring responsibilities. Personal ill-health as a result of ageing was a factor for a number of respondents, and caring for older relatives with health problems was a key activity for others. Again, whilst some of these health changes were not related to life-stages, such as one respondent's cancer or the injuries which three respondents experienced as a result of vehicle accidents, others were, such as one respondent's heart problems, and the age-related conditions experienced by others.

### **8.3.8 Conclusion**

This section has examined aspects of the context within which household strategies develop, primarily through a consideration of the wider factors which bear on them, and the academic literature which illuminates this. The objectives which households are

seeking to achieve through their strategies were then examined, through looking at the various ways in which they defined the term 'getting-by'; and relating this to a framework developed by Lister (Lister, 2004). The social, economic, spatial and temporal forces which shaped the household strategies were then outlined. How this analysis can make a wider contribution to research, literature and policy thinking will be the focus of the next section.

## **8.4 What can a study of these strategies add to existing studies of, and policy towards, household work strategies?**

### **8.4.1 Introduction**

This final section will summarise how the study confirms, refutes or adds to existing literature, as well as making comments on wider implications for policy. In doing the latter, the intention is not to undertake a detailed analysis of policy on the issues covered, but simply to highlight key areas where the research raises questions about the approaches of the local and national state.

### **8.4.2 The Literature: What the Study Confirms**

The study confirms that the household work strategy concept is a valid one, and the household is a suitable unit of analysis, as argued by Wallace (Wallace, 2002). It has value beyond research into questions such as the prevalence of informal or cash-in-hand working, or gender divisions within households; and this study demonstrates that an analysis of a household as a unit can illuminate areas as diverse as the wider impacts of caring for disabled children, or the importance of pets for many people. What is important to households, how they get things done, and what they are unable to do is revealed through researching their strategies.

Secondly, the research also confirms that a qualitative approach is an appropriate way to research household work strategies, and the use of semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to gather much richer data, as well as allowing respondents to spend more time reflecting on what they thought was important. This would not have been possible with the more proscriptive research design a quantitative approach would have demanded. Gaining a perspective on what respondents thought was less important also revealed useful data. Although the semi-structured interview schedule examined all of the same themes investigated by Pahl and Williams (Living and Working on Sheppey, 2018; Pahl, 1984; Williams & Windebank, 2001; Williams, 2002, 2004), which used structured questionnaires and qualitative approaches, the lack of time which respondents spent on matters like home repairs, for example, revealed that most of the respondents did not have significant problems with the state of their homes.

Third, in relation to household work strategies, the research confirms the validity of the total social organisation of labour (TSOL) framework developed by Glucksmann, which focusses on the inter-connectedness of work across different social and economic spaces. Specifically, an approach which understands TSOL at the four levels articulated by Glucksmann in 2006 is important - looking at work across the boundaries of production, distribution, exchange and consumption; across the boundaries of paid and unpaid work, formal and informal work; the relationship between work activities and non-work activities and relations; and differing temporalities of work (Glucksmann, 2006). Although Glucksmann's identification of consumption as work has been queried in some quarters (Watson, 2009), it was clear from the respondents that consumption,

including dealing with the new on-line delivery models of clothing retailers, transferred work to consumers.

The study also confirmed the importance of networks in household work strategies, where they existed, with some respondents using them to access employment and work opportunities; where geographically dispersed networks based on communities of interest and scholarship were important; and two other respondents used local networks to help with issues like home improvement. The use of geographically dispersed networks to secure employment and work opportunities confirms the thesis of scholars from Granovetter onwards about the importance of networks for middle-class professionals (Granovetter, 1973; Pichler & Wallace, 2009; Wallace & Pichler, 2007; Witt, 2004). This links to discussion of bridging and bonding social capital, and the research confirmed the importance of bridging social capital in a work context for professional people, as well as a practically focussed use of bonding social capital by a working-class household (Williams, 2003, 2008b).

Authors from Pahl onwards have identified the importance of families in household work strategies (Pahl, 1984; Wallace, 2002; Warde, 1990), and, as highlighted in the literature review, other scholars have highlighted the continuing importance of families and family ties in society (Duncan & Smith, 2006; Mulder & Kalmijn, 2005) in spite of popular and press commentary that suggests the decline of the institution's importance. This study confirmed the importance of family networks as a key enabler of household work strategies where they existed. A number of respondents were able to call on either resident or non-resident kin for help with a range of needs, particularly assistance with

care for elderly people; and other respondents contributed to the care of grandchildren. A number of caveats need to be set out however. As Smith has identified, family connection and involvement, whilst more widespread than assumed by some scholars, is far from universal (Smith, 2011). Amongst the households in the study this was definitely the case with three factors working against this kind of support - difficulties in family relationships, distance, and what such support might involve (the latter was especially apparent in the case of the parents of autistic children, but was also an issue for some older people).

In addition, the study confirmed the importance of space in shaping household strategies. As discussed previously, this is identified strongly in Jarvis's work (Jarvis, 2005b, 2005a; 1997); and also in Warde's research on households in England's North West (Warde, 1990; Warde & Hetherington, 1993). However, it is underdeveloped elsewhere in the household strategies literature, and only partially in related work on issues such as work, poverty and belonging. Nevertheless, it is necessary to reiterate that spatial issues have a major impact on the abilities of households to function: proximity was one critical factor in the involvement of other family members in household work strategies, and where respondents had family locally it was more likely they would be involved in household strategies as either a donor or receiver of assistance.

### 8.4.3 The Literature: What the Study Refutes

Before outlining areas where the study diverges from existing literature, or refutes it wholly or in part, it is important to enter a caveat. This study is based on seventeen interviews with households in one Yorkshire former mining village. The areas where the respondents in this case study differ from the profile of the local population have already been outlined.

What can be identified are trends and themes, which help explain wider developments and areas where the literature may not be keeping pace with developments in such localities and the wider economy and society. It is clear, for example, that for most of the respondents the support that they had from family, friends and neighbours with practical tasks was limited. Where this happened it was a matter of luck, or reflected the presence of family members locally willing and able to help.

No-one engaged in cash-in-hand working, and only two respondents reported using cash-in-hand services in the recent past, and in one case the payments were token ones which did not reflect the full cost of the work done. This is contrary to the picture reported in much of the literature on informal working and household strategies, where such practices were widespread (Barbour & Llanes, 2007; Copisarow & Barbour, 2004; Evans et al., 2006; B. Jordan & Redley, 1994; Jordan & Travers, 1998; MacDonald, 1994; Pahl, 1984; Travers, 2001; Williams & Windebank, 2001; Williams, 2002, 2004). On the

basis of this research, it is clear that informal working is increasingly a phenomenon that is geographically, socially and culturally concentrated; and that it was not a significant part of the lives of the households in the study. This finding stands even if one partial explanation may be the reluctance of individuals to disclose cash-in-hand transactions in a research interview context, although from what respondents in this research disclosed about their demanding lives, it would have been difficult for most of them to have found the time for work of this nature.

There are a number of possible explanations for this. The respondents were largely incomers, or people not integrated into village networks for various other reasons, as has been discussed already. Others in the village may have been using informal approaches of various kinds, but this group of people were not. Most of the respondents lived in houses in good condition, and in the case of social tenants where landlords had undertaken recent work to address decency issues. Only two respondents were currently undertaking any home improvements. As such, there were relatively few opportunities for the 'handyman' sector of the construction industry. Most of the respondents had cars repaired by garages in the conventional economy, and those who did not were competent mechanics who did the work themselves. Similarly, domestic appliances were generally replaced rather than repaired, and some respondents actively chose the relatively more expensive option of extended warranties.

None of the respondents undertook cash-in-hand working, even those in self-employment, because those they provided services to procured them on an on-the-books



basis. This is in line with wider patterns across the economy, with much greater degrees of commodification. The consolidation of fields such as office cleaning and building maintenance in the hands of facilities management contractors, or the growth of Pubcos such as J.D. Wetherspoon mean that payroll administration is centralised, and costs are tightly controlled<sup>46</sup>. It could be argued that the circumstances of the respondents reflects wider developments in the economy.

A further theme in the literature which was not borne out in the case study were disparities in the volume or nature of domestic work undertaken by male and female partners. Where men's earnings were more significant in household budgets, and their formal employment hours were longer this was reflected in pragmatic decisions about the division of labour. It needs to be recognised that most of the households were single-person ones, but where couples lived together the stark divergence in roles reported by authors from Oakley onwards was not widely apparent (De Meester, Zorlu, & Mulder, 2011; Oakley, 1985; Speakman & Marchington, 1999; Treas, 2008; van der Lippe, De Ruijter, De Ruijter, & Raub, 2010; Wallace, 2002). Male and female partners did report sharing tasks, and two of the men had changed careers to take a greater part in family life. Some researchers have identified a gradual shift, with Bianchi et. al. noting that the time which US men are committing to domestic tasks has increased (Bianchi, Sayer, Milkie, & Robinson, 2012), and a number of the respondents reported that they were taking on more at home. However, it is also important to note that some divisions were still apparent - women took on more of the role of domestic organisation, and adopted some of the performative approaches to traditional gender roles described by Skeggs and

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<sup>46</sup> The researcher asked an individual known to them who worked in management for Wetherspoons whether off-the-books employment was possible within the company's systems, and he confirmed that it was impossible.

others; notably Davies and Fitchett (Skeggs, 1988, 1997, 2001, 2004, 2011, Davies & Fitchett, 2015).

Finally, whilst not a refutation, the research confirms the changing nature of mining communities. Greater commuting, in-migration, and demographic change mean that the communities described by Dennis et. al. and Warwick and Littlejohn have changed significantly (Dennis et al., 1969; Warwick & Littlejohn, 1992), evidenced in a range of ways whether it is the inexorable progress of men who took redundancy in the 1980's and 1990's, then went onto Incapacity Benefit, and are now going through retirement as shown in the demographic figures, or the development of new private speculative homes and estates within villages. None of those interviewed had worked in the mining industry, although over half had fathers who had been miners.

#### **8.4.4 The Literature: What the Study Adds**

This study adds to the literature on household strategies in a number of ways. The first, not unimportantly, is the fact that this research is amongst the few pieces of qualitative research looking at household strategies in the past decade. Whilst other research has considered some of the issues within this study - poverty, work, childcare - consideration of these and other diverse topics within the context of a household strategy has not been undertaken within a UK context since White's research, published in 2006 (White, 2006); and household work strategies within mining communities have not been the

subject of published field research since Samers and Williams undertook fieldwork in Bassetlaw in North Nottinghamshire in 2002 (Samers, 2005; Williams, 2008b).

Samers and Williams identified a situation where better-off residents used the cash-in-hand economy as a way of getting cheaper goods and services, and it was not used by poorer people as a means of coping with adversity. In the current research, it was clear that with some exceptions, the dominant economic mode used by participants was the formal one. People work in the formal economy, people get services in the formal economy, or in a number of cases they do without them. Use of the informal economy, amongst what is a predominantly better-off group of people, was limited. Increasingly studies of the informal economy will have to factor in the impact of increasing commodification represented in the growth of facilities management models, centralised human resources functions, and the impact of regulatory and insurance regimes in areas as diverse as property repair and child-minding.

The second key area where the study adds to the existing literature on household work strategies is in terms of care. The majority of the households were involved in care, either for others within their household, or for family members outside the household. The intensity and demands of the care which a number of the respondents undertook has not been covered in any previous study of household work strategies, and gives a new perspective on the choices and demands involved for some households. Future research on household strategies needs to allow for the impact of emotion work, and factor in care as a key component in many household strategies. In turn, research into how

families and households undertake care could usefully incorporate the perspectives of household work strategy research. As this study shows, caring can have huge impacts on a household and the individuals in it.

The third area where the study adds to the existing literature is in relation to the question of space, and its impact on household strategies. The village is a place in a locality, and the characteristics and location of both shaped household strategies in both positive and negative ways. A number of those in work had relatively lengthy commutes, or travelled as part of their employment. The nearest supermarkets were at least fifteen minutes away, as were local services like hospitals and high schools. Whilst Jarvis considered the spatial aspects of household work strategies extensively in relation to middle-class city dwellers (Jarvis, 2005b), other researchers have not applied a spatial filter to their work in the same degree.

Fourth, given the lack of recent research on household work strategies, the addition of research conducted since the growth of phenomena such as internet retail, greater casualisation and externalisation in the economy, illuminates the degree to which these have impacted on the lives of respondents. Whilst respondents were using the internet for accessing financial services, as well as making purchases of consumer durables, home-shopping for groceries had not taken a major place with any of those interviewed. In addition, although the growth of casualisation in the economy is generally viewed in negative terms, for a number of respondents it allowed greater control and choice over their working lives.

Fifth, the research illuminated for the first time the importance of pets in the household strategies of some individuals, shaping choices about where they lived, their spending, their working patterns and other daily activities. It was clear that for a substantial proportion of the respondents pets were very important, but the coverage of pet-ownership as a topic within research or academic literature on anything other than matters related to health (in particular mental health, and well-being) is minimal. Again, this highlights a new potential avenue for research, in particular the place of pets within wider household strategies.

Finally, and very importantly, the study is a picture of aspects of a mining community in transition, almost thirty years after the closure of the local collieries. Fieldwork was undertaken in late 2016 and early 2017, a year after the closure of Kellingley Colliery, the UK's last deep coal-mine. Kellingley lies just outside the Wakefield Metropolitan District, eighteen kilometres from the village. This research, it is hoped, represents a further step in the continuing examination of change and reinvention in Britain's mining communities.

#### **8.4.5 The Questions for Policy**

Detailed consideration of the policy environment that shapes household work strategies is not a focus of this thesis, or the research that has contributed to it. Nevertheless, the environment within which the respondents developed their household strategies was profoundly shaped by both central and local government policies, and it is both

appropriate and important to reflect on this as part of the discussion on the research. In addition, the experience of the respondents raises questions for a number of the assumptions that underlie policy, on issues ranging from care, through to regeneration and economic development.

The first series of questions relate to planning and housing policy. The research revealed a number of respondents who were living in a location which was sub-optimal for them. Whilst they welcomed the open spaces to which they had access, these spaces did not provide easy access to retail, cultural or childcare facilities because planning policies, both in Wakefield, but also in other neighbouring local authorities such as Kirklees and Leeds, had created housing scarcity and priced the research participants out of those local markets where they could have accessed these services. This was in response to sustained local pressure to prevent further housing development in areas around Wakefield, Leeds and localities along the M62 corridor within the Kirklees and Calderdale Districts<sup>47</sup>.

The discussions around the restrictive nature of green belt policies in the UK have been outlined previously in the literature review (Cheshire, 2009; Cheshire et al., 2018; Hilber, 2010; Hilber & Vermeulen, 2014; Lawless et al., 2011). Like millions of other British households, a number of respondents were the unwitting victims of such policies which concentrate new development in sub-optimal locations, which reflect neither consumer preference nor economic opportunities. As the economy revived after the

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<sup>47</sup> Pressure of which the researcher was acutely aware as a Leeds City Councillor from 1991 to 2004, and an officer responsible for housing policy in Wakefield in 2006-2007.

recession of the 1980's, developers took opportunities in areas such as the eastern parts of the Wakefield District, Barnsley and Doncaster, because in politically marginal areas to the north and west - such as Wakefield west of the M1, Kirklees, Leeds and Bradford - such development opportunities were effectively closed off, both by local opposition, Conservative MP's nervous about their seats, Labour MP's nervous about their prospects, and national policies which prioritised brownfield development.

The arguments around the constricting nature of green belt policies in the South East have been extensively outlined by Cheshire and others (Cheshire, 2009; Cheshire et al., 2018; Hilber, 2010; Hilber & Vermeulen, 2014; Lawless et al., 2011), and discussed in Chapter 2. The most extensive piece of work commissioned by Government in recent decades on housing supply, the Barker Review (Barker, 2006), identified the planning system as the main cause of inelasticity in housing supply in England and Wales. At the same time, local authorities such as Wakefield, Barnsley and Doncaster released land for housing development to maintain the viability of villages with poor public transport access, limited access to local services such as retail or childcare, and little prospect of improving them.

Cheshire points out that the neighbouring Barnsley and Doncaster districts built twice as many houses in the five years to 2013 as Oxford and Cambridge (Cheshire, 2014). Despite this, the numbers actually completed in Barnsley and Doncaster were (and are) overshadowed by planning allocations which are unlikely to be built because of lack of developer interest. Planning policy can allocate land for housing for families. It can

view favourably the creation of facilities such as nurseries to support working parents with childcare. It cannot generate a market to sustain their business model from fee income, which, in the UK context, relies on working parents who meet most of the cost of childcare without state subsidy. This implies a critical mass of working parents who need full-time childcare, and have the income to pay for it.

What planning policy did achieve for the respondents were houses they could afford which allowed them the space to run businesses from home, or to give separate rooms to three autistic children. They would not have been able to do this in smaller homes, and this raises important questions for policy on issues such as housing design standards and their effective absence in the English context. On the other hand, for respondents, the availability of affordable housing allowed them the space to keep and exercise dogs, which given the developing evidence on the positive impact of dog-ownership and health outcomes, could also usefully be a focus for policy. This includes incorporating the needs of pet-owners in policies related to public open space, as well as design standards and planning policies related to housing.

In terms of housing standards a further issue arises. Those with relatively new homes and those with socially rented homes did not have significant issues with their housing conditions. For the owner-occupiers this reflected the (young) age of their properties, and for the social tenants (and the ex-social tenant who had recently exercised the right-to-buy) the impact of housing 'decency' spending which had not just improved the fabric of their homes, but had also provided new kitchens and bathrooms (Comptroller



and Auditor General, 2010; Hickman, Walshaw, Ferrari, Gore, & Wilson, 2011; Penfold, 2015). This removed a significant area where traditionally households have used the informal or cash-in-hand economy to make improvements to their homes in the absence of state-supported investment.

The working-age respondents who did not have caring responsibilities that prevented them working were, with one exception, all in work. In most cases that work was well-paid, and skilled; and many respondents had fulfilling jobs or businesses where they had significant degrees of autonomy and responsibility. Ballyhenry lies in an area which many commentators describe as 'left-behind', a set of phenomena of significant current policy interest in the UK (Cadywould & Paget, 2015; Quilter-Pinner & Nandy, 2018), which has also been the focus of discussion in the US (Hendrickson, Muro, & Galston, 2018).

Hendrickson et al. focus in particular on measures that could connect workers to opportunity, and it is noteworthy that a number of the respondents had either undertaken additional qualifications whilst in work (one a Doctorate, and four Masters-level qualifications), and three had moved from unemployment to skilled work through undertaking adult education provided through Wakefield Council's Adult Education Service, in two cases via subsequent degree-level study. Even where individuals had not returned to formal learning, the majority took a pro-active approach to enhancing their skills. The sample is a small one, but reinforces Overman's contention that successful regeneration has a strong focus on improving outcomes for people (Lawless et al., 2011), as opposed to places.

At the same time, there are also significant questions about other aspects of the connection of people to economic opportunity. Those respondents who commuted to major cities described car journeys that were long and gruelling, and inadequate public transport links, and on this it is worth noting that New Labour's significant investment in regenerating the coalfields did not yield a single extra metre of electrified commuter railway, and in many cases journey times from Yorkshire coalfield communities to Leeds and Sheffield have not improved substantially since the age of steam. Recognising the burdens of commuting, as well as reducing pressure on the road network, requires the kind of passenger growth and modal shift achieved when lines to the north-west of Leeds were electrified in the 1990's, and passenger growth figures of 15% per annum were recorded (Broadbent, 2006).

The final questions for policy relate to care. The issues are complex, but in relation to care both for older people and for young people with disabilities, care in the community was clearly care in the family, and the levels of stress it placed on carers related strongly to the level of support from wider family networks. Similarly, successfully combining work and having children depended heavily on the presence or absence of grandparents. As such, care burdens carried the risk of removing skilled and talented people from working life and careers.

Addressing this through policy changes is complex, and needs to be sensitive both to varying household circumstances and the fact that in many cases families and households are often the best informed experts on the issues they face. What is not

useful, however, are policies which only offer support and help at the moment of crisis, do not help with prevention, or intervene only in response to formal complaints, threats of legal action or when there is a safeguarding issue. Funding organisations which involve carers, families and those who are cared for, which provide both advocacy and services would be a useful starting point.

#### **8.4.6 Conclusions**

The research clearly affirmed the continuing validity of the household strategy as an approach to understanding the interrelationship of different forms of work within households, as well as a way of understanding how households set priorities, respond to their circumstances and get by in the broadest sense. It also confirmed the usefulness of qualitative methods in researching them. Whilst in this particular group of respondents, there was limited evidence of cash-in-hand working, the research showed households using a variety of the forms of work suggested by Williams and Nadin (Williams & Nadin, 2010), and clearly supported the validity of the Total Social Organisation of Labour framework as advanced by (Glucksmann, 2006, 2009).

The research also showed the growth of new working practices, in particular a positive choice of self-employment as a means of self-realisation, and changing work patterns including casual working; and complex and demanding shift-patterns. This was linked in some cases to both positive and enforced choices to reduce working hours and progressively withdraw from the labour market. It was also clear that most of the

respondents, including those who had retired from formal work had an active commitment to developing their skills and learning.

Family networks, or their absence, were also highly significant for the respondents. Whilst it was clear that in some cases wider families had largely abandoned some of the households in practical terms, in other cases it was clear that the physically dispersed nature of the families was a factor in lack of contact. Kinship is clearly important, and can create networks of support and aid. In the absence of UK data comparable to that of the Netherlands or Nordic countries, where panel studies such as the Netherlands Kinship Panel Survey allow detailed research into the operation and geographical scope of families and kinship networks (Blaauboer, Mulder, & Zorlu, 2011; De Meester et al., 2011), studies of how family networks operate rely on primary qualitative research such as the current study.

Space, and the operation of spatial constraints and enablers was very important in shaping household strategies. Much of the research on household strategies to date, whilst spatially located in terms of research sites, gave relatively little consideration to the nature of the impact of space on strategies. The work of Jarvis is an exception (Jarvis, 1999, 2002, 2005b, 2005a, 2008, 2010, 1997), but even Pahl's study of household strategies on the Isle of Sheppey, whilst deeply sensitive to the history and spatial context of the island, gave relatively little consideration to how space impinged on strategies. In part this is understandable in what was a traditional and settled working class community, but in this research it was clear that older patterns of mining villages

with minimal commuting beyond the village had been replaced in part by commuting and work-related travel patterns across the Yorkshire region and beyond, and widely dispersed family networks.

Whilst it has already been made clear that the nature of the sample requires caveats on any assertions on the place of cash-in-hand transactions in household strategies, their use by the respondents was very limited. In no case was a respondent either working on this basis, or using traders for whom this was a major element of their business model. What cash-in-hand working took place was at the level of token payments, and in recognition of favours. Most work which could not be done by household members or kin was sourced in the commercial economy or not done at all.

Similarly, previous literature that showed stark gender-based divisions of labour within households, or with women undertaking the bulk of household work and housework was not borne out in the interviews. Again, those interviewed included a large number of single-person households where this question did not apply, but in larger households, tasks were generally allocated pragmatically on the basis of who had time available; although in families women still often took the lead in organising.

The study confirmed the growth of commodification in the economy, as well as the development of the self-service economy, with every household using online banking for example; and a clear majority using online retailing. This represented a significant change from previous research, as did the importance of care in the respondents'

household strategies. Other departures included the importance of pets in some household strategies, where pet-ownership shaped choices about work, lifestyle and location. Finally, the study revealed much lower levels of home maintenance and home improvement activity than in previous research, in part as a result of the implementation of the Decent Homes standard by social landlords.

## 9. Conclusions

Many of the detailed findings and implications of this research study have already been set out in the preceding chapter. This chapter adds to these with some wider reflections on the study, its progress and its context; draws some general conclusions, and then identifies some avenues for further research.

The key reflection on the research itself is a recognition that whilst the initial intention was to focus on the prevalence (or otherwise) of informal economic activity of households in the case study village, this was not how the process transpired. There was evidence in two interviews of some cash-in-hand working, but none of the respondents did this themselves, and even those who used it did so to a limited degree. Approaching gatekeepers of various kinds might have helped broaden the participant sample and enabled the inclusion of individuals working wholly or partly on a cash-in-hand basis, but by the time it was apparent that the approach adopted was not connecting with these individuals, an extensive set of interviews had already been arranged and undertaken with the respondents in the study. These interviews yielded rich and granular information on other aspects of household strategies, and it was decided to focus on the issues these raised.

Undoubtedly, scope remains to research those areas of economic activity where cash-in-hand and off-the-books working remains significant, for example in catering, small-scale construction and property repairs or taxi-driving. Such an approach would focus on a

participant recruitment strategy which used gatekeepers and established trust in networks. However, this would need to be balanced against a realistic assessment of the continuing scale of cash-in-hand working, with for example, taxi drivers increasingly working with cashless models of operation such as Uber.

The research generated a number of overarching findings and reflections. First, judged from the perspective of the respondents, these households were not part of a stereotypical, close-knit mining community. In any case, the community was changing as a result of increasing levels of in-migration, demographic change, and changing work patterns. The respondents, although not generally antipathetic to the village community, had few links with it, and limited social contacts within it. They were not generally part of networks within the village from which they could have derived practical support. Their networks, where they existed, were based around kinship or work.

Second, waged and salaried employment, or trading income from legitimate businesses, were the key element of most work strategies. Where income from employment was absent, savings, benefits or pensions sustained households. Virtually all goods and services which could not be created or undertaken within the household were obtained commercially. Having said this, the respondents were a creative and proactive group of people, generally committed to learning and self-development, both to help their career development but also because of a desire for personal fulfilment. Third, as an issue, care loomed large for a significant number of the respondents, and in terms of what household strategies are generally expected to do, the most vexatious and problematic



questions were issues related to care. Where family (or in one case close friends and neighbours) were close at hand, and the needs relatively routine, such as getting an elderly parent to a hospital appointment, or picking up younger children from school, these burdens were not overwhelming. But where the needs were complex, or family was absent or non-existent, the work of care dominated households. In those cases where older people could not accomplish essential physical tasks and had no access to help, their lives were severely constrained and they experienced distress.

Finally, the hundreds of new houses that had been built since the late-1990's had wrought changes in the village. Commuting incomers were becoming a significant element of the population and the networks that research participants in this category had were, by and large, beyond the village. At one level, this infusion of incomers was sustaining some village services in the statutory sector, such as schools and medical practices. But, at another level it was obvious that little of their disposable income was spent within the village sustaining local businesses. Financial services, retail, leisure and entertainment were all provided or accessed elsewhere or obtained online.

This represented a process of suburbanisation, although within an existing community, and the gradual reconfiguration of pit-villages as dormitory communities. This is a process mirrored to a greater or lesser extent in small towns and villages right across what geography textbooks used to describe as the 'Yorks-Notts-Derby Coalfield' (North & Spooner, 1982; Price, 1971), and driven in part by the planning constraints on housing development already identified, and in part by the availability of employment at or near the region's motorway junctions in logistics facilities and call-centres.

Considered together, these issues raise questions for further research. The first area relates to the disconnection between the geography of economic opportunity and where employment is; where England's proscriptive planning system deems populations should reside; and the presence or absence of services that support families, primarily childcare. The research revealed one family where grandparents drove substantial distances every week to care for grand-children so that parents could work. This family are by no means unique, but the model of grandparents looking after grandchildren in three locations spread across England's largest county is predicated on a wide range of factors, including the existence of grandparents. Whilst Champion, Greene and others have quantified phenomena such as long-distance commuting and internal migration, there is no recent qualitative or quantitative research on its impact on families (Champion et al., 2009; Cheshire et al., 2018; Anne E Green, 2004).

A further, related research area is the question of the wider economic and social impacts for families of caring for children and adults with severe disabilities. From the point of view of the state, this represents a convenient and low-cost outcome, and for most families it also reflects a clear preference, and a view amongst professionals in health and social care that autonomy and choice for service-users is important. However it was clear that for a number of respondents it had adverse longer-term consequences on their employment and income, and it was also predicated on a scenario in which the carers would not have or develop problems of their own. Given that three out of four of the parents of severely disabled children in the research had limiting conditions themselves, this cannot be taken for granted. Nevertheless, although the literature on different

aspects of conditions such as autism is extensive, virtually none focusses on the experiences of families, in particular wider social and economic impacts.

Finally, the study raises some questions for economic development and regeneration policies beyond those already discussed. Some interviewees had moved into self-employment and running their own business. Their experience reinforced the widespread view in the literature that those who make a success of new businesses and self-employment have existing experience, skills and contacts (Rotefoss & Kolvereid, 2005). The potential that self-employment and entrepreneurship offered for personal fulfilment, and achieving degrees of autonomy in working life was also clear. More importantly, the research reinforces the view that improving outcomes for people, as opposed to places, is critical. Overman correctly draws the distinction between place-based programmes that achieve public goods, and people-based programmes that improve outcomes for individuals in terms of employment, income and career development (Lawless, Overman, & Tyler, 2011). The opportunities that a number of the individual respondents had been offered through adult education and continuing learning, which they had taken, and the ownership they had over their skills and knowledge gave them the power to change their circumstances<sup>48</sup>.

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<sup>48</sup> The journey of which this research represents the culmination began with a visit to the village in the early 1990's. I was newly appointed in what was then the Economic Development Department of Wakefield Council, and my manager suggested I look at a newly created community learning facility. Three individuals mentioned in the acknowledgements worked with the local community to develop the facility. The late Peter Elliott, Classicist, Castleford fan and for decades Wakefield Council's Principal Adult Education Officer; the late Tony Palmer, my manager, ex-Castleford Colts player, Open University graduate, and Rugby League referee; and the late Pat McConachie, my colleague, Glaswegian, ex-John Brown shipyard apprentice, and Northern College and Manchester University Economic History graduate. Almost thirty years on, that facility still delivers adult education. As a researcher, three of the biggest challenges in terms of reflexivity and maintaining detachment were when, mid-interview, I realised the person I was interviewing had transformed their life through adult education in a facility our team created, on a programme commissioned and funded by Peter Elliott, who died in 2018.

## **Appendix 1: The Households**

Seventeen households are included in the case study, which was carried out in late 2016 and early 2017.

### **001 - Abigail and Thomas**

*White British; White British-Asian*

*Owner-Occupiers*

Abigail and Thomas were a married couple, aged 40 and 42 respectively, with three children, boys aged 13 and 7, and a girl aged 10. Abigail worked in a student support role at a college elsewhere in the region, and Thomas was a self-employed craftsman, having left a job as a manager in a Retail/Wholesale business.

Abigail had no contact with her parents, and some contact with siblings, and Thomas had limited contact with his parents and siblings. All their relatives lived in the North West.

They lived in a modern (post-2000) house on a new estate, opposite Katie and Mark, which they had bought sixteen years previously. Their monthly income was just over £1400, and they claimed child tax credits of £55 per month.

### **002 - Katie and Mark**

*White-British*

*Owner-Occupiers*

Katie and Mark were an unmarried couple, aged 43 and 42 respectively, with one child living with them, a girl aged 6. Mark had a son aged 13, from a previous relationship, with whom he had infrequent contact. Katie worked in the travel industry, and Mark had recently become a self-employed technician in the media industry, after a previous career in IT development.

Katie and Mark had some contact with parents living elsewhere in the region.

They lived in a modern (post-2000) house on a new estate, which Mark had moved into 11 years before. Katie had moved in with him eight years previously. Their monthly income was £1000 from Katie's work; and Mark had an earnings target of £1500 which he was not achieving at the time of interview.

### **003**

*Interview with two local Councillors.*

#### **004 - Owen and Grace**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupiers*

Owen and Grace were a married couple, aged 75 and 74 respectively, with two grown-up children who had moved away (a daughter aged 50, and a son aged 48), and a number of grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Owen had been a teacher, and Grace had worked in the health service.

They had some contact with siblings in Nottinghamshire and Yorkshire.

They lived in a detached house built in the early 1970's, and receive occupational pensions of £2000 per month approximately, along with state pensions.

#### **005 - Muriel**

*White British*

*Socially-Rented*

Muriel was 66 and lived with her second husband. She suffered from a range of mental and physical conditions, which rendered her housebound. At the time of interview she was waiting for a kidney transplant. She had three children, who lived in the south of England, from a previous marriage.

Muriel and her husband had lived in a bungalow rented from the local ex-Council RSL for ten months. They previously lived elsewhere in Yorkshire, but transferred, as her husband also had an elderly mother living in the locality. Her husband was a lorry-driver, but also did all the housework given Muriel's health problems.

The interview was a difficult one to record, as Muriel wanted to watch American Football on television, and there is no transcript. Any reporting is based on notes taken contemporaneously.

#### **006 - Carole**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Carole was 53 at the time of interview, and lived with her husband Alan in a house which they had recently bought from ex-Council RSL, where Carole had lived since 1988. Carole worked at the local community centre, where she was an administrator, caretaker and cleaner, as well as organising activities at the centre.

Carole had two sons, Luke aged 25 and Carl aged 24. Both sons have moved out of the house, but lived locally. Alan had four children with his late wife, and one with an earlier partner, Jim aged 36, who lives with his wife and children in Leeds. His other children were Alex, 34 who lived near Castleford with his wife, and Jenny aged 26 who was single and lived in Pontefract. His daughter Carlie lived in the village with her partner Jason and their two children, and his youngest son Dylan (22) lived near Castleford with his girlfriend.

She earned £120 per week, Alan earned £190 per week, and they received £57 per month in tax credits.

Neither Carole nor Alan had a driving licence, and they used Alan's motorbike for travel.

### **007 - Ewan**

*White Scottish*

*Private-Rented*

Ewan who was 45 lived in a rented terraced house in the village, and had shared care for his daughter, Camilla (13) with her mother who lives in Wakefield. After leaving school with no qualifications, Ewan had a succession of jobs in the motor trade, as well as travelling extensively, before returning to learning as a mature student in his forties. He was undertaking a masters degree in his chosen field at a university in a major city forty miles south at the time of interview, and was working part-time in his field of study across the UK and occasionally abroad.

Ewan and Camilla's mother never lived together, but Camilla had lived with them jointly all her life, spending slightly more time with Ewan than her mother. Ewan moved to Yorkshire from his native Scotland in 2005 to share in parenting Camilla. Ewan earned approximately £1500 every month from work associated with his studies. He had lived in the village nine years, and in his current privately rented house for three. Camilla's mother lived in the village until recently, but moved to Wakefield which was more convenient for the denominational high school that Camilla attended.

He was a car owner, which he used for work-related travel to locations across the UK.

### **008 - David**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

David was 55, and was born in another mining village five miles away. He had lived in or near the village for much of his life, although he also lived in London, working as a teacher. He had lived in his current house for twenty years, but at the time of interview it was for sale, as he was moving in with his ex-wife in a village nearby.

He had four children (girls aged 30, 15 and 13; and a son aged 23) and undertook some care for his ex-wife who has limiting conditions. His eldest daughter lived with a partner in a nearby village, and has two children. His son lived with David sometimes, when he was not working away with his job which took him round the UK. His mother who was disabled also still lived in the village, and David helped his sister (who also lived in the village) who was her primary carer.

He was unemployed at the time of the interview, having recently returned from a contract in the Middle East which ended early.

David grew his own produce in his garden, had undertaken extensive improvements to his Victorian terrace home, and also pursued hobbies in a workshop attached to the house. He owned a number of vehicles.

### **009 - Lorna**

White British

Owner-Occupier

Lorna was 64 at the time of interview, and had lived for sixteen years just outside the village in a semi-detached home which she owned outright. Unlike the other respondents, the interview with Lorna took place at the local community centre. She had grown up in the family farm at the top of the village, but moved away in her twenties to work as a nurse, before taking professional training in the NHS for a specialist role. She retired from the NHS in her mid-fifties because of ill-health, and looked after her parents in their final years.

She had one son, aged 27, who lived in London with his partner. She and her son's father divorced just after he was born. She returned to live in the village, and brought up her son on her own. She had one brother, who was running the family farm, and from whom she was estranged. She lived on a combination of her state and NHS pensions, and earned approximately £20,000 per year.

She looked after her late mother's dog at one of the farmhouses on the farm, and also had some sheep at a farm in another county. She was a car owner.

### **010 - Carl**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Carl was 44 at the time of the interview, and lived on his own in a detached house in the village, originally built in the 1930's, and extensively modernised by Carl and a previous partner. He worked as an engineer at a factory six miles south, and earned £48,000 per year. He started with the company as an apprentice, and gained qualifications to Masters level subsequently. His parents and other siblings lived in the East Midlands.

He owned a car, a van, and a motorcycle and was heavily involved in motorsport. He had two cats.

## **011 - Sinead**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Sinead was 35 at the time of interview, and had moved into an Edwardian terrace house in the village eighteen months previously. She was buying the house on a mortgage. Before moving to the village she had lived with her mother in a village 8 miles to the west, to which she had returned after living in shared houses in Leeds where she had lived after returning from a university outside the region.

Her university degree was in languages, and she originally planned to move abroad, but she had worked in retail instead, before getting her current job. This was in a managerial role in a government agency, where the 24-hour, 365-day nature of the service meant that she worked shift patterns which involved night and weekend work. Her earnings were approximately £1400 per month.

She was a car owner, which she used to get to her work in offices at a motorway junction 8 miles away.

## **012 - Frank**

*White British*

*Socially-Rented*

Frank was 52 at the time of interview. He was born in the village, but moved away to Wakefield in his twenties. He lived in a flat rented from Wakefield District Housing with his mother, who was 84 and in poor health. He moved to the flat, which was his mother's two years previously, when injuries after a fall meant his mother could no longer live safely on her own. He had moved from Leeds, where he had lived with a partner, but that relationship had broken up just before Frank moved back to the village.

Frank had gone to college when he left school, but this had not worked out and he had a succession of retail jobs in his twenties, before a combination of road traffic injuries and mental health problems meant that he dropped out of work during his thirties, returning to learning and subsequently university in his mid-forties. After this he had worked in the care field, supporting people with mental health problems and learning difficulties in various settings.

He was his mother's full-time carer, and he received Carers Allowance for this. He was disabled himself, and had a prosthetic leg and his other foot was damaged. He had a



brother living in a village between Wakefield and Leeds who was 63, and a sister living in the village who was 65.

### **013 - Jennifer (37) and Jordan (42)**

*White British*

*Socially-Rented*

Jennifer lives in a house rented from Wakefield District housing with her partner Jordan and their daughter Carla, who is 10. They have another daughter, Lucy (16), who stays with them at weekends but lives with her grandmother during the week. They have lived in their home for 11 years, and for a short period before that with Jordan's late sister in a house nearby. Before living with Jordan's sister, they had lived in a nearby town.

Neither Jennifer or Jordan work, as they are full-time carers for their daughter Carla, who has severe autism. Their circumstances are also complicated by Leon's COPD<sup>49</sup> diagnosis. Jennifer was able to detail their income completely, which included Income Support, Child Tax Credits, Child Benefit, Carers Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Higher Rate Mobility Component to help them support Carla, who uses a wheelchair much of the time.

Carla attends a special school in one of the district's larger towns, and is transported there by the local authority.

### **014 - John (61) and Karen (52)**

*White British*

*Socially-Rented*

John and Karen were a married couple, who have been living in a house rented from a local Housing Association for fourteen years, having previously lived in Wakefield<sup>50</sup>. John was on long-term sick leave from his previous job as a coach driver/courier for a local company, and health complications he had after serious heart problems and a hernia meant that he was unlikely to return to work. Karen worked as a breakfast and lunchtime supervisor at a local school, and as a cleaner.

John came originally from the North West, but had lived in the district for some decades after leaving the army in his late twenties. John's first wife had died, and Karen had divorced, and between them they had seven children, the eldest aged 37 and the youngest 13. Only the youngest, a daughter, lived at home and attended a denominational high school in Wakefield. They were in contact with all their children, with a number coming to the house frequently. One of John's sons, although in his twenties and serving in the army, still regarded the house as home.

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<sup>49</sup> Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease.

<sup>50</sup> John was the only respondent whom I knew from my previous work.

### **015 - Gillian (41) and Terry (48)**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Gillian and Terry came from villages in the Barnsley District and had moved to their home on a new estate in 2002. Gillian had gone to university then trained as a nurse, Terry had joined the Royal Navy before taking a university degree, and worked as a network engineer for a national cable and media company. He earned approximately £2000 per month.

Gillian had stayed at home to look after their sons, aged 12, 10 and 8 at the time of interview after they were born. All three boys were on the autism spectrum, with diagnoses of Asperger's syndrome. They received DLA for their two older sons, and the youngest was being assessed at the time of interview.

They had two cars, one of which was Terry's company vehicle. They also owned dogs and chickens, and Gillian had a horse at a local farm.

### **016 - Rosemary (46)**

*White English*

*Owner-Occupier*

Rosemary had lived in the village for four years, having moved there shortly after her return from living abroad for some years in a near-Eastern country. She had bought the house, which was an ex-council property, and was renovating it largely herself. She had a total of ten animals, mostly dogs and cats, and her animals were a large part of the reason she had returned to the UK.

She had brothers aged 46 and 56 living in the region with whom she did not have regular contact. She also had a son aged 28, who was married with a four-year-old son, and lived near Leeds. Her contact with this son and his family was also limited.

### **017 - Bryony (36)**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Bryony was 36 at the time of interview, single, and had moved into her flat in a post-2000 development in the village four months previously. She was buying the house with a mortgage. She had moved out of her mother's house in a village 8 miles away. She had

two brothers, one married with two children living in Pontefract, and the other living with their mother.

She worked as a transport administrator in the logistics centre of a national wholesale chain, 8 miles from her flat. She earned just under £300 per week.

She owned a dog.

**018 - Betty (75)**

*White British*

*Owner-Occupier*

Betty was 75 years of age at the time of interview, and lived in an ex-council house in the village which she was buying with her son. She moved to the village from Leeds in 2012, having lived in Leeds most of her life. She was a widow, and had had a number of catering businesses with her late husband, as well as working in retail and the garment industry. Her father had been a miner in pits in the Wakefield area, and she had one surviving sister who lived in the South West.

She had two sons, one of whom was 43 and lived in Leeds with a partner and her son; and another aged 47 who lived in the village with his second wife and one daughter and twin sons.

She received a State Pension.

## Appendix 2 – Key UK Research on the Informal Economy and Household Work Strategies

Date(s)	Researcher	Location	Sample Size	Nature of Research; Funding
1978-1981	Pahl and others	Isle of Sheppey, Kent	730 (950 target) – simple random sample of 1 in 9 residents in 19 polling districts	ESRC-funded, qualitative research by academic research team, with quantitative interviewing carried out by SCPR (now NatGen)
1991	Warde	North-West England – across the region	219	Questionnaires administered by school sociology 'A' level students with parents as part of work for an INSET course for sociology teachers
1994	Leonard	West Belfast	150 households – simple random sampling (separate interviews with 128 women and 118 men); 120 school pupils.	Not stated

Date(s)	Researcher	Location	Sample Size	Nature of Research; Funding
1998-2001	Williams, Windebank	England (11 localities – both rural and urban, deprived and affluent)	861 – varying between 50 and 100 per locality, collected through a spatially stratified sample of every <i>n</i> th household	Joseph Rowntree Foundation
2002	Williams, Samers	Bassetlaw (two wards – one affluent, one deprived)	120 – collected through a spatially stratified sample of every <i>n</i> th household	Contract research for Nottinghamshire Business Link
2004	White	Leicester (two wards – one affluent, one deprived)	100 – 50 households in each ward, collected through a spatially stratified sample of every <i>n</i> th household	PhD research

**Appendix 3: Attributes Sheet and Interview Schedule**

## Respondent Attribute Sheet

<b>Respondent Number</b>	
<b>Name of respondent</b>	
<b>Address of respondent</b>	
<b>Electoral Roll Number</b>	
<b>Date</b>	

<b>Age</b>		<b>Time at current address</b>		<b>Ethnicity</b>	
16-24		More than 12 months		White (British)	
25-29		12 months or less		White (Irish)	
30-34		Don't know		White (other)	
35-44				Mixed (White and Caribbean)	
45-64		<b>Time in area</b>		Mixed (White and Black African)	
65+		More than 12 months		Mixed (White and Asian)	
		12 months or less		Mixed (other)	
<b>Gender</b>		Don't know		Asian or Asian British (Indian)	
Male		>12 months <5 years		Asian or Asian British (Pakistani)	
Female		>5 years to ten years		Asian or Asian British (Bangladeshi)	
		Over ten years		Asian or Asian British (other)	
				Black or Black British (Caribbean)	
		<b>Where before?</b>		Black or Black British (African)	
		Place		Black or Black British (other)	
		Postcode		Chinese	
				Any other ethnic group	
				Refused to say	

<b>Type of Household</b>							
Single Person	Single with children	Married couple, no children	Unmarried couple, no children	Married couple with children	Unmarried couple with children	2 or more adults sharing	Other
<b>Your Employment Status</b>							
Working full-time (30 hrs or more a week)	Working part-time (up to 30 hrs per week)	Self-employed	On a Government training scheme	Unemployed and looking for a job	Unable to work because of long-term sickness or disability	At school or in other full-time education	Retired from paid work
Looking after the home or family	Other						
<b>Your Employment</b>							
Job Role		Employer Address and Postcode					
<b>Health</b>							
Are any other members of your household experiencing health problems?							
<b>Benefits</b>							
Is any other member of the household receiving benefits?							
<b>Your Family</b>							
Parents Address and Postcode			Brothers and Sisters Addresses and Postcodes				
Children's Names							
Children's Ages							
Living at Home Y/N							



Address							
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<b>Tenure</b>		<b>Internet</b>		
Rented from a HA		Yes		
Rented from a co-op		No		
Rented from Local Council				
Rented from Private landlord		<b>Mobile Phone</b>		
Owned outright		Yes		
Owned with a mortgage		No		
Other				
Don't know		<b>Landline</b>		
		Yes		
<b>Approximate Household Income</b>		No		
Weekly		<b>Notes</b>		
Monthly				
Annual				
<b>Car/Van Ownership</b>				
1				
2				
3				

Interview Schedule

Respondent Number

Main Theme	Sub-Themes to Explore	Additional Interview Prompts
<b>History and Structures</b>		
So would you like to tell me a little about yourself/your household?	How was the household formed?	Based on answers in attribute sheets, probe how long respondent has been in the village, and reasons for moving to the village (if applicable).
	Does partner/spouse come from village? (If applicable)	If partner/spouse from outside village, how much contact with family elsewhere?
	Respondents educational and employment history?	Work patterns and location? Impact of work patterns on rest of household? Are you looking for progression or more hours at work? If not working, what's stopping
	Educational and employment history of other people living in household?	Work patterns and locations? Impact of work patterns on rest of household?
Thinking about the last five years, have been any major changes for your household?	Births?	
	Children moving out?	
	Marriages/New Relationships?	
	Deaths?	
	Job Change?	

Thinking about the last five years, have you (or your landlord) made any major physical changes in the house?	<p>Give examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Garden</li> <li>• Extensions</li> <li>• Rewiring</li> <li>• Re-plumbing</li> <li>• Re-roofing</li> </ul>	<p>How did you get these done?</p> <p>How were they paid for?</p>
<b>Pressures</b>		
Would you like to tell me about the impact of people's work on the household?	<p>Are you/people getting enough hours at work?</p> <p>Do you feel that you/people's jobs are secure?</p> <p>Would anyone like to work less hours?</p> <p>Do your/people's work patterns cause any problems?</p>	
<b>OR</b>		
What's the impact of not being in work on the household?	<p>Do you/people feel under pressure to get a job?</p> <p>Why?</p> <p>Would there be any problems if you/people got a job?</p>	

<p>What are the major costs for the household?</p>	<p>Which ones put your budgets under the most pressure?</p> <p>Which costs are going up?</p> <p>Which costs are reducing?</p>	
<p>If something goes wrong in the house – for example with the plumbing, heating or electric - how do you deal with it?</p>	<p>Has this happened recently?</p>	<p>Did you pay for that?</p> <p>Did you get help?</p> <p>From whom?</p>
<p>Does anyone in the household have long-term health problems or disabilities that make daily life more difficult?</p>	<p>What is the impact for you?</p>	<p>Are you getting the support you need? Are you being expected do too much?</p> <p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Do you feel the council or the NHS should be taking more responsibility?</p>
<p>Are you involved in supporting a family member or friend outside the household with long-term health problems or disabilities?</p>	<p>Could you tell me about what this involves?</p> <p>What is the impact on you?</p>	<p>Are they getting the support they need? Are you being expected do too much?</p> <p>Can you tell me more about that?</p> <p>Do you feel the council or the NHS should be taking more responsibility?</p>

Thinking about the children, who takes them to school or nursery/do they go to nursery?	If they don't go to nursery, is there any reason why not?  What's the impact of childcare on the household?	Would you choose to have full-time childcare to allow you to work/work longer hours?
	Are the children involved in any after-school or leisure activities?	Who takes them to these activities?  Would the children do after-school activities or leisure activities if there was someone to take them?
<b>Tasks</b>		
Who would you say does most of the organisation for the house?	Why is this?	
Who does the housework?	Could you say why this is?	Would you get someone else to do this if you could?
Who does the cooking?	Could you say why this is?	
Do you have a garden and or/an allotment?	Who looks after it?  Could you say why this is?	What does this involve?
How do you manage money in the household?	Do you budget for the household?  How do you reach decisions?  Is the problem organising the budget, or a lack of income?	Banking?  Insurance?


<p>Could you tell me about how the household does the shopping?</p>	<p>Who does it?          How's it paid for?          When?          Where?          How do they get there?</p>	<p>Use of online shopping? What for?</p>
<p>Tell me about how the household gets about?</p>	<p>Give examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to work</li> <li>• Social and family occasions</li> <li>• Health and hospitals</li> <li>• School</li> </ul>	<p>Could you get by without a car?          Does lack of transport stop you doing things?          How are cars maintained? Payment and costs?</p>
<p><b>Networks</b></p>		
<p>Do you people around you help out if you need it?</p>	<p>How?</p>	<p>Would you offer something in return?          Have you done this recently?          Is this help important to you?          Are there things you need done, but can't get done? Why?</p>
<p>Do you help out other people around you if they need it?</p>	<p>How?</p>	<p>Would they offer something in return?          Have you done this recently?          Is this help important to them?</p>

<p>Are you involved in any community organisations?</p>	<p>Give examples</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Church</li> <li>• Trade Unions</li> <li>• Community Groups</li> <li>• Political Parties</li> <li>• Clubs or societies</li> <li>• Sports clubs</li> </ul>	<p>Probe nature of involvement</p>
<p><b>Getting By</b></p>		
<p>Could you say what getting by means to you as a household?</p>	<p>As a household would you say that you are getting by? Comfortably/with difficulty?</p> <p>How do you feel you compare with others in the area?</p> <p>How do you feel you compare with others in your family?</p>	<p>Peers – others at work or people you socialise with?</p>



## Appendix 4: Introductory Card and Letter of Approach

### Introductory Card

<p><b>Research on Households in .....</b></p>  <p><i>My name is John Erskine, and I'm a Doctoral Researcher in Sheffield University's Department of Urban Studies and Planning. I will be working in your area over the next few months.</i></p>	<p>I'm interested in talking to local households about how they get by.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• How you manage to get things done like household repairs?</li><li>• Do care for children, or elderly or disabled relatives?</li><li>• How you balance this with work and getting an income.</li></ul> <p>I'm looking to do one-hour interviews with local residents. As a thank-you for your time, you will receive a £10 shopping voucher. Want to take part?</p> <p><i>Phone/ text</i></p> <p><i>E-mail</i></p>
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<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Confidentiality</b></p> <p>My research is supervised by Professor John Flint and Dr Ed Ferrari, in Sheffield University's Department of Urban Studies and Planning.</p> <p>Sheffield University takes its responsibilities to people who help us with our research seriously. This research has been fully approved through the University's Research Ethics process. Your name, your details and anything you say will not be shared with anyone, and any findings will not contain any material which could identify you or other members of your household. You do not have to answer any questions which you don't want to, and you can stop the interview at any time.</p>
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Letter of Approach

John Erskine  
Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
Sheffield University  
Western Bank  
Sheffield  
S10 2TN

e-mail:

Mobile:

Date:

## Research into the Local Economy

My name is John Erskine, and I am a Doctoral Researcher based in Sheffield University's Department of Urban Studies and Planning, where I am studying for a PhD Degree supervised by Professor John Flint. The full title of my research is

*'The Informal Economy and Household Work Strategies in Coalfield Communities in Yorkshire'*

You may have seen the introductory cards I have recently delivered around the village explaining my research. My research focusses on how people and households get by in the current economic climate. As well as people's employment I am also particularly interested in how households get the things they need done - for example childcare, home maintenance, or car repairs.

Your name has been selected at random from the local Electoral Register, and other participants have also been selected in the same way, and **I am writing to invite you to take part in the research by answering a series of questions about yourself, your household and how you get things done.** The questions are in two parts, a set of general questions about yourself and your household, and a series of questions about your employment (if you are in work), and also how you get the things you need done. **In all, this should take just over an hour, and in recognition of your time commitment, you will receive a £10 shopping voucher.**

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in the research, and if you decide to take part you will be given a further copy of this letter (and a consent form to sign). You

can withdraw from the research at any stage. In addition, if there are any particular questions you would prefer not to answer, you are free not to answer them. You will not need to give any reason for this. It is hoped that this work will be influential on local and national policy-makers.

**Any personal details will be kept confidential to me as the researcher**, and will not be shared with any other person, organisation or public body or used for any other purpose. Paper-based information will be stored securely under lock and key until the end of my research, then destroyed. Answers which you give to questions will be entered on a secure database on the University of Sheffield's computer system, with no details that would identify you, your family, or where you live.

The project has received ethical approval from Sheffield University in accordance with the University's ethical policy, as detailed at <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/ris/other/gov-ethics/ethicspolicy>.

I will be in your area to make contact within the next week, but if you would like to contact me to discuss the research further, ***please do not hesitate to contact me on the following telephone number or e-mail address:***

**Telephone:**

**Email:**

If you decide you would like to take part in the research, you can make an appointment for me to visit by phone or e-mail.

Thank you for reading this, and I hope you are able to take part in the research.

Yours Sincerely

John Erskine

Doctoral Researcher

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