

**The Right to Food and the Rise of Charitable  
Emergency Food Provision in the United Kingdom**

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## **Abstract:**

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This thesis explores the rise of nationally co-ordinated or facilitated emergency food provision in the UK and the implications it has for the realisation of the human right to food. Through extensive qualitative research with two of the country's main emergency food providers it explores the adequacy of this system of food acquisition in relation to the social acceptability and the enduring sustainability of the provision and explores where responsibility lies – in practice and in theory – for ensuring everyone has the ability to realise their human right to food.

The findings tell us that these systems are not clearly adequate or sustainable by right to food standards. They illustrate how emergency food provision forms an identifiably 'other' system to the socially accepted mode of food acquisition in the UK today and one which is experienced as 'other' by those in food poverty. They also show that providers cannot guarantee being able to make food available through these systems and that access to these projects and the food they provide can be difficult for those in need.

Importantly, however, the findings also show that it is emergency food organisations that are increasingly taking responsibility for protecting people against experiences of food poverty. These organisations are assuming this responsibility in parallel to the significant withdrawal of the welfare state which is impacting on both the need for and nature of emergency food provision. The thesis argues that what is required are clear rights-based policy frameworks which enable a range of actors including the state, charities and the food industry to work together towards, and be held accountable for, the progressive realisation of the right to food for all in the UK.

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## Preface

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The first visit time I came across a Trussell Trust Foodbank was in 2010 in Oxfordshire. As part of a project commissioned by the county's Stronger Communities Alliance (OSCA), looking at the contribution of faith communities to Oxfordshire life, I interviewed the people running Bicester Foodbank as part of a chapter on faith based organisations (see Jarvis et al 2010). At this point, the Foodbank Network was small, with around 20 foodbanks, yet it sparked a particular interest. My work at the time – as a researcher at Coventry University's Applied Research Centre in Sustainable Regeneration (SURGE) – involved various topics but included work on food poverty and faith-based social action, both of which this initiative embodied. From this work in Oxfordshire, I went on to a dedicated piece of research (funded through Coventry University's Applied Research Fellowship scheme) looking at the on-going growth of the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network which more than doubled in size between 2010 and 2011. The experience of that Fellowship served to highlight the wide range of issues involved in both the need for and provision of foodbanks, as well as pointing to the range of other organisations involved in similar provision and led to a proposal for full-time doctoral research at the University of Sheffield commencing September 2011.

The fact that the number of foodbanks and the number of people turning to them for help has increased so rapidly since that first piece of work raises important questions for researchers and policy makers in the UK about the efficacy of the welfare state, how the recession and rising cost of living is impacting on people and how just our food and food retailing systems are for the poorest in our society. But they also highlight the level of care and solidarity that we find in our communities and by now tens of thousands of people are involved in these organisations through volunteering or donating food to help local people in need. Whether they are celebrated as expressions of compassion and care or held up as representations of failing

socio-political and economic systems, food charity is telling us something about experiences of poverty and hunger in the UK today.

I have been inspired by the level of commitment and compassion those involved in emergency food provision have for their work and for the care they show people who have no other choice but to turn to charity to feed themselves and their families. At the same time, however, I have found the fact that such provision is not only necessary but that need for it is apparently growing in our affluent society, deeply shocking. This feeling of shock and incredulity certainly drives this research; seeking answers to the question of how we have arrived at this situation and what is different about this particular moment in time. Whilst it is of course important to acknowledge the contributions charitable food projects make, I also feel that they raise bigger questions about our food system and social policy.

Given the growing public and policy concern for the issues of food poverty and in particular rising numbers of people turning to food banks, I very much hope that this thesis is able to provide timely insight and evidence of use to a range of actors involved or interested in the issue of food charity and food poverty, not just in the United Kingdom but elsewhere also. In writing this thesis I have endeavoured to make the findings as clear and concise as possible in the hope that this particular academic output makes for accessible reading. I have also provided recommendations to emergency food providers, policy makers and others on the basis of the evidence I have collected and hope, very much, that this evidence can make a constructive contribution to the debates surrounding the growth in need for and provision of emergency food in the UK today.

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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In the context of economic crisis, recession and austerity we have seen the emergence of charitable initiatives providing food to people in need on a widespread scale in the United Kingdom. The formalisation of this provision and its facilitation and co-ordination at a national level is unprecedented in this country and raises important questions about what drives need for emergency food and how best to respond to that need. This thesis explores this recent rise of emergency food provision in the UK and the implications it has for ensuring everyone has access to adequate, appropriate food experiences.

In the year 2013-2014 the largest food banking organisation, the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, distributed 913,138 food parcels to adults and children across the country, up from 128, 697 in the year 2011-2012 (Trussell Trust no dateA). The last few years have been particularly formative for the emergency food movement in the UK - not just in terms of operation as illustrated by these statistics but also in terms of public profile and political discourse. The Guardian newspaper (Moore 2012) declared 2012 to be 'the year of the food bank' and hunger and the rise of food banks has been the subject of articles and segments in many of the country's leading newspapers and on many television and radio stations (see Boyle 2014, Morris 2013, Mould 2014, BBC radio 4 2014, 4 News 2014, amongst many). In the realm of national politics, food banks have been the subject of Parliamentary debates, have sparked the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group and are, at the time of writing, the subject of a Parliamentary Inquiry (Hansard 2013, Register of All-Party Groups 2014, Food Poverty Inquiry 2014).

The growth of charitable emergency food provision (voluntary initiatives helping people to access food they otherwise would not be able to obtain) has been particularly sharp over the last few years in the UK, as illustrated by the over seven fold increase in the number of people being helped by Trussell Trust foodbanks since 2012 (Trussell Trust no dateA). This has occurred within a context of economic austerity and welfare reform. Public sector finances have been set on a programme of cuts, some of which are yet to kick in. An agenda of extensive welfare reform has introduced caps to entitlements, increased conditionality and an ethos of individualised risk. This reform has occurred in parallel to an increasingly stigmatising discourse used to talk about people experiencing poverty; one which has come to be dominated by terms such as skivers, shirkers and scroungers (Chorley 2013, Williams 2013, Jowitt 2014). The effects of the recession (as well as these social policy shifts and cuts in government spending) are being felt as what is termed a 'cost of living crisis' (Dugan 2014). The cost of many household expenditures including housing, food and fuel has increased whilst incomes have stagnated (Hirsch 2013).

Several published studies and surveys have charted the impact of austerity and rising cost of living on people's ability to access adequate healthy food. The Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) (2014, p.20) highlight how falling income and rising costs of living, including rising food prices, have meant that food is now over 20% less affordable for those living in the lowest income decile in the UK compared to 2003. Recent work by Hossain et al (2011, p.5) highlights that during the recession households were shopping and cooking differently to reduce expenditure and increasingly relying on their social networks for support. A survey commissioned by Shelter (2013), the national housing charity, found that in the year leading up to the survey 31% of the 4,000 respondents had cut back on food in order to meet their housing costs.

Since the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government came to power in May 2010 a range of social policy reforms have been put in place. In addition to widespread cuts to funding for statutory services – with local authorities seeing their budgets cut by 30% in real terms between 2008-2015



(Hastings et al 2013) – there has also been the largest set of changes to the welfare state seen in recent decades. These reforms include the introduction of a household benefit cap, reductions to entitlements to council tax benefit, abolition of child benefit, reduction in the annual uprating of benefits, and an under-occupancy penalty for those receiving housing benefit and restructuring of benefits (and their terms and conditions) for those who are out of work because they are ill or disabled (see Beatty and Fothergill 2013 for full summary). Given the relationship between income levels and experiences of food insecurity such changes to the incomes of those who are out of work are a particularly important back-drop to this thesis.

In fact, the rise of food banks and other emergency food charity has occurred in the context of what social policy researchers are referring to as a significant era in the development of the British welfare state. Several previous such moments are often cited: the period following the great depression in the 1930s; the post-World War two era; and the period following the oil crash of the 1970s (see Farnsworth and Irving 2011a). Farnsworth and Irving (2011a) describe the evolutionary history of the welfare state in relation to a 'golden age' post-world war two, which was followed by an 'age of limits', which was in turn followed by retrenchment and in the most recent few years 'welfare states are embarking on a new age of welfare: the age of austerity' (Farnsworth and Irving 2011a, p1).

Whilst the years which have followed the economic crash and subsequent recession in the mid-2000s has been referred to by Farnsworth and Irving (2011a) as likely to be the most formative in terms of its implications, the trajectory of the evolution of the welfare state in the last 40 years is a particularly significant backdrop to this thesis. The conservative governments of the late 1970s and 1980s were heavily influenced by the neo-liberal interpretation that the welfare state had 'undermined entrepreneurialism, individual responsibility, business competitiveness and in particular the operation of labour markets' (Farnsworth 2011, p252). This in turn paved the way for the conceptualisation of 'new welfare' in the early 2000s, organised around the idea that 'publically organised and funded welfare is detrimental to economic competitiveness' (Ellison and Fenger 2013, p611). What we

have seen in the context of the last 30 years, Ellison and Fenger (2013, p611) argue, is a shift from the ideology of 'collective public care arrangements' towards 'individual responsibility for social risk through the marketised competitive provision of services'. What we have seen over the last 30-40s years, then, is an increasingly individualised notion of risk and care, increased conditionality and communitarian and contractarian interpretations of dependency and solidarity (see Dean 2008; Ellison and Fenger 2013).

As a defining 'era' of welfare state development, 2010 marked the end of 13 years of New Labour governments and the arrival of a Conservative led coalition government (in coalition with the Liberal Democrat Party). Coming into government in the wake of the economic crash of the mid-2000s and in the middle of a recession, the government introduced stringent austerity measures including some of the largest cuts in public finance ever seen and some of the most extensive welfare reforms since the introduction of the welfare state in the 1940s. Importantly, this age of austerity was framed as inevitable (Farnsworth 2011) – as an inescapable consequence of the economic crash and recession which followed; as the only way to drive down the government deficit which was framed in terms of government spending (particularly with reference to spending on welfare). At the same time, there has also been a discursive shift. Alongside an increased emphasis on individualised notion of responsibility and risk (for poverty) there has been in Britain an increasing emphasis on the notion of 'deserving' and 'undeserving' poor people. As Ellison and Fenger (2013, p616) describe it, there has been a 'proactive demonization and pathologisation of people who are unable or unwilling to participate in the formal labour market'. Political and media discourse which pits 'strivers' and 'hard working families' against 'welfare scroungers', 'skivers' or 'shirkers' is increasingly common and representative of this shift (Chorley 2013, Williams 2013, Jowitt 2014).

In the context of a significantly reformed welfare state, which shifts responsibility for looking after those outside of the labour market away from society and back on to the individual and which shifts practical responses from publicly funded services and onto local communities, food banks have

come to be seen as representing key elements of this re-shaped welfare state, the 'Big Society', through the mix of 'libertarian paternalism and communitarian forms of social solidarity' that are embedded (Ellison and Fenger 2013 p616).

The contemporary era of austerity and welfare reform therefore raise two particularly important issues when considering the growth of emergency food provision in the UK. In the first instance, how these dynamics are driving need for food banks and other forms of emergency food provision (particularly in the case of public finance austerity and social security reform) and in the second, how they may be shaping the nature of the food charity response (particularly in relation to Big Society policies and how more recent historic shifts in the shape and role of the voluntary sector may have paved the way for highly professionalised national scale organisations).

### **Why study emergency food provision in the UK today?**

The provision of free or subsidised food to people in need is not new in the United Kingdom. Churches and other charitable initiatives have long provided such assistance in local communities (McGlone et al 1999). However in the last ten years, we have seen the establishment and proliferation of national-scale organisations that are facilitating or co-ordinating this work in more formalised ways (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). These organisations are therefore different from historical responses to hunger which have been more ad hoc and localised and relatively out of the view of the mainstream media.

The growth of these charitable initiatives has been and continues to be an increasingly high profile issue and has sparked reaction from all sectors including NGOs, the media, the private and public sectors. There has also been considerable political reaction from politicians at local, devolved and national levels (for example see Hansard 2013). Used by some as representative of a failing welfare state and others as representative of community responsiveness, these have so far remained rhetorical reactions

and have yet to translate into substantive policy responses, driven by elected members of Councils, Assemblies or Parliament. At the national level there has so far been no policy response from policy makers within related government departments (notably the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs who has responsibility for household food security, Department for Work and Pensions who oversee social security or Department for Communities and Local Government or Department of Health). Whilst officers in Devolved and Local Governments have worked on various responses such as grant funding or food strategies, these have been local and often short or medium term responses (see Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2014).

This absence of national-level policy response may in part be explained by a general lack of policy ownership of issues of food poverty or household food security. Currently, the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) has responsibility for 'food security' (see Defra 2006). But even where they intersect with areas of specific responsibility there appears to be little engagement with the links between for example income levels and hunger or retail provision in local communities from other key Whitehall Departments such as the Department for Work and Pensions (who oversees social security) or the Department for Communities and Local Government (who oversees planning regulations).

This lack of substantive policy response may also in part be explained by a general lack of evidence on the nature of the phenomenon and the particular drivers of need. As the 2013 Rapid Evidence Review conducted for Defra found, the knowledge base on key aspects of emergency food provision in the UK – such as drivers of need and outcomes of this assistance, drivers of project growth and 'best practice' amongst provision – is highly limited but emerging (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). Whilst this thesis represents one of the first systematic pieces of research into national-scale provision, previous pilot work (Lambie 2011, Lambie-Mumford 2013A) provides some earlier knowledge. In addition to more recent work by Sosenko et al (2013) in Scotland there have also been a range of localised studies by non-academic

policy researchers (Minahan 2012; CAB forthcoming and 2013; McCarthy 2012; GLA 2013).

Other countries in the Global North have more extensive evidence of the work of emergency food charities, the demand for them and their outcomes. In North America in particular, where there is a longer history of this provision and a range of studies are available (Poppendieck 1994 and 1998; Riches 2002; Loopstra and Tarasuk 2012; Berner and O'Brian 2004; Ahluwalia et al 1998; Daponte and Bade 2006; Bhattarai et al 2005 among many). There is also an evidence base emerging on the phenomenon across Europe with studies conducted in Finland (Silvasti 2011) and Germany (Pfiffer et al 2011).

The international evidence base which exists tells us that turning to emergency food provision is a strategy which is employed by individuals and families as a last resort by those who are the most food insecure; having said this, issues of uptake and barriers to access exist and many who may be in 'need' do not attend (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). Ultimately, previous food security analyses have found that emergency food assistance can necessarily only provide relief for the symptoms of food insecurity, not address the root causes of that insecurity (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014).

Within the wider context of austerity and rising costs of living, and based on the international evidence which tells us that emergency food provision is a response to symptoms of food insecurity or food poverty, the growth in this provision on a national scale indicates a particularly acute problem of hunger and chronic lack of access to food amongst parts of the population. This is an important site for social science research given the urgency of experiences of hunger and the scales of this experience that food bank statistics indicate.

Looking at the rise of emergency food provision is not however the same as looking at the nature of hunger. The question of 'why food provision now?' is not the same as 'why hunger now?' and the latter would need to involve situating this current moment on a longer history and evidence of hunger which takes into detailed account the trajectory of food prices, other costs of living, the structure of the food system and labour markets and many other

elements. Exploring such an empirical question would be made all the harder by the fact that neither the government nor researchers have measured food poverty or food insecurity systematically over time in the United Kingdom. The question of 'why food provision now' is no less complex but can be categorised differently. It has embedded within it a question about the nature of the hunger experience now (as outlined above) but also two other systemic factors: the chipping away of welfare provision since the late 1970s, which has accelerated since the mid-2000s on the one hand; and the increasing professionalisation and changing nature and role of the voluntary sector on the other.

What we are seeing then is arguably both an *organisational phenomenon* and a *hunger phenomenon* with numerous points for social science exploration. The trajectory of changes to services including welfare diversification and public spending cuts has shaped emergency food provision as an organisational phenomenon. Welfare diversification has necessarily gone hand-in-hand with an increasing professionalisation of the voluntary sector which has become more business-like (a fact embodied in both case study organisations in the fact they work as not for profit franchises) (see Alcock, 2010). Particularly in the last four years we have seen at the same time public spending cuts to statutory services which has meant that budgets are not always able to cope with providing discretionary support to people they help, providing food vouchers instead (see Lambie 2011; Lambie-Mumford 2013A). These factors indicate that there is something particular about these national charities as *charities*, something bound to these various contemporary and recently historical factors which have resulted in particularities in their nature (as voluntary organisations) and the context in which they work (in the voluntary sector) which means we would not have seen anything exactly like this, even if the need (or 'hunger phenomenon') were the same.

That being said, the nature of need – whilst beyond the scope of this research – may be changing and particular elements of it are distinct to the current era of welfare reform. Social security reforms and administration processes are raising questions about the adequacy of incomes in relation to

rising cost of living. But the contemporary moment is about more than social security, it is also about the political-economies of low pay and insecure labour; the rise of so called 'zero-hour contracts' and changes to tax credits.

There are therefore several reasons why emergency food provision in the UK forms an important focus of social science investigation. In the first instance, embodied within this phenomenon are many socio-economic and political shifts which have been affecting the country over recent years, including rising cost of living, economic recession and welfare reform to name a few. Previous evidence from other countries in the Global North indicates that emergency food projects could represent litmus tests of deeper, more embedded social phenomenon, with the most vulnerable people turning to this kind of provision only when they have exhausted all their other social and economic 'coping' strategies. Finally, this is a particularly timely moment for undertaking research into emergency food provision and the last few years – indeed the duration of this research (September 2011 – September 2014) have been particularly formative for these organisations.

### **Situating this research**

The preface to the thesis tells something of the story of this research, in terms of how it came to be. Here the opportunity is taken to situate the thesis more firmly within the context of my other work on food poverty and emergency food provision. Prior to beginning the doctoral research, a smaller project (Lambie 2011) was completed. This was funded by a research fellowship from Coventry University and was undertaken between February and August 2011 and published in November 2011. The findings of this research, which were also published in the *Journal of Social Policy* (Lambie-Mumford 2013A), fed directly into developing the methodology and research questions of this thesis, representing as it does an extension of this initial work.

In January 2014, I was commissioned as part of a team from Warwick University and in partnership with the Food Ethics Council to undertake a

'rapid evidence review' for the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra). The aim of this work was:

'To arrive at a better understanding of the 'food aid' landscape in the UK and the 'at risk' individuals who access such provision, as well as the means and drivers for seeking access.' (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014)

The bulk of the research was conducted between February and May 2013, with rounds of review from May 2013 onwards until its publication in February 2014. The final output (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014) provides a comprehensive review of the evidence on emergency food provision which was available in the UK as of early 2013.

Following on from this work, myself and Professor Elizabeth Dowler from the University of Warwick went on to undertake a small qualitative project funded by the Communities and Culture Network+ into food aid and living with food insecurity. This project ran from October 2013 – February 2014 and had the aim:

'To work with food assistance recipients to better understand their experience of the process of local food aid in the city and 'managing' with food insecurity and to highlight the key issues which are raised for future research and policy making.' (Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2014)

This small piece of work, involving in-depth narrative interviews with recipients of food aid provided some valuable insights into the drivers of food aid use and how the uptake of food aid fits within household 'coping' strategies. Some of the key findings from this research are also shortly to be published in the British Food Journal (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler forthcoming 2014).

Alongside these empirical studies and publications I have also submitted written evidence to several local and national level inquiries including the London Assembly Food Poverty Investigation in November 2012 (Lambie-Mumford 2012); the Sheffield Food Plan consultation in December 2013 (Lambie-Mumford 2013C); and the Parliamentary Inquiry into Food Poverty and Hunger in Britain (Lambie-Mumford 2014A; see also Lambie-Mumford 2014B). I have also, over the three years of this research, advised in formal



and informal capacities several national NGOs in relation to their responses to the rise of emergency food provision including Church Action on Poverty (CAP), Church Urban Fund (CUF) and Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG).

The research presented in this thesis represents the biggest study I have undertaken on the rise of emergency food provision in the UK, so in truth these other projects fit around the thesis. However they do form an important part of the experience and shape of my doctoral research.

### **Focus of the study**

This thesis forms a study of the nature of emergency food provision in the UK and involves an empirical investigation into how it works as a system and a critical engagement with the phenomenon specifically from a right to food perspective. It assesses UK emergency food provision against key criteria of the right to food perspective, focusing on the adequacy of this system of food acquisition in relation to the social acceptability and the enduring sustainability of the provision and explores where responsibility lies – in practice and in theory – for ensuring everyone has the ability to realise their human right to food.

Within the context of the slim but emerging evidence base and heightened engagement from policy makers and the media, much of the emphasis on the question of emergency food provision surrounds *accounting for the growth in food bank provision* (Butler 2013A, Butler 2013C, Boyle 2014, Cooper and Dumbleton 2013). Given the capacity of the study and the changing nature of this provision during the lifetime of the project it was never going to be possible for the thesis to provide a systematic account of the drivers of growth of emergency food provision across the country in recent years. Whilst the study was able to engage with some important drivers and dynamics of growth such as organisational motivations and logic and project capacity, it is not able to offer an authoritative account of growth generally. Beyond the constraints necessarily imposed upon the research by issues of capacity, a further rationale for shifting the focus away from

accounting for growth was the increasing amount of work being done on this by other researchers and policy makers. The research which underpins this thesis therefore offers a unique and timely set of evidence regarding the nature of emergency food provision as a *system of food acquisition* and the *implications* of the growth of this provision, rather than providing an account of the growth itself. This was seen to be particularly important given the urgent questions that this growth poses, for researchers, policy makers, the voluntary sector and the individuals and communities that are struggling to access food.

The thesis studies emergency food provision in a theoretical and analytical framework driven by the human right to food. Emergency food provision is explored as a particular response to the problem of food poverty<sup>1</sup> and discussed in the context of a wider solution-focussed right to food framework.

Whilst elsewhere in the Global North researchers have been working to apply the right to food, illustrating its analytical utility and real-world applicability (for example Riches 2002, 2011), in the UK very little published work has attempted to do so (see Dowler and O'Connor 2012 and Lambie-Mumford 2013A as exceptions). As will be outlined in Chapter 2 the right to food is enshrined in the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights and set out in detail in several key documents (United Nations no date, UNESCO 1999, United Nations 2014). The Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food at the United Nations defines the right as:

"The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear." (DeSchutter no date)

Within this framework, adequate access to food is a prerequisite for the realisation of the human right, but only one part of its progressive realisation (Mechlem 2004; Riches 1999). The thesis employs two particular aspects of

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<sup>1</sup> Defined as 'The inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so' (as used by Dowler et al 2001, p.2 and taken from Radimer et al 1992 cited in Riches 1997)

the human right to food to form an analytical framework for presenting the research findings, set out by the UN Economic and Social Council (1999): the emphasis placed on the adequacy, acceptability and sustainability of food; and the responsibility that is placed on states to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food.

Employing the right to food as the theoretical framework for the research and exploring these two dimensions in particular is especially interesting given the shifts embedded within the rise of food charity and the socio-economic and political contexts in which it fits: increasing neo-liberalisation of the political economy in the UK; retrenchment of welfare provision; and powerful political discourses surrounding the work of the voluntary sector and communities providing support to those in need in the form of the conservative platform of the 'Big Society' (see Kisby 2010; Taylor-Gooby and Stoker 2011). This rights framework and the voluntary sector initiative it helps to understand, therefore also gets to the heart of a key current debate in social policy in the United Kingdom: what are the roles and responsibilities of the state and charitable sectors when it comes to preventing and protecting people from poverty and, in this case, hunger?

The thesis draws on empirical evidence from the two largest national charities involved in the facilitation or co-ordination of emergency food provision in the UK – the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare. Extensive qualitative research was undertaken with these organisations and data was collected in two stages: from local emergency food projects in several areas across the country; and at the head offices of the national organisations themselves. 52 interviews were conducted over a year long period (September 2012 – October 2013).

On the basis of the findings which are presented and the theoretical developments which are made through the research, the thesis argues that we need to conceptualise the problems (in the shape of the need for emergency food) and the solutions to that need in terms of rights, solidarity and care. The human right to food provides an important framework for focussing on solutions which see food as a social good; sees access to food

as a social aim and ethic which states, alongside other actors and their citizens, can work together to achieve in a progressive way. The thesis argues that there could well be a significant role for food charities within this – but a social and political role, rather than a food-based role. Given the problematic nature of charitable food provision from this rights perspective – it is not a protected entitlement, providers are not easily held accountable and it is not an accepted means of food acquisition – their role as hunger relief is not a progressive one. However, as social movements and as part of political networks, these national organisations have the potential to play significant roles in the future realisation of the human right to food in the UK and beyond.

Emergency food provision is found to form important sites of caring (that is, from the perspectives of those involved in the provision these projects provide important opportunities to enact care). This appears to be occurring in the context of increasingly reduced state-based caring and as a result of food and welfare systems which are failing to prevent hunger and protect people adequately from it when it occurs. Whilst they may provide sites at which some people are protected from the worst effects of hunger when it occurs, focus should be on something much more – the prevention of hunger and the progressive realisation of a human right to food for all and food experiences that are acceptable in the society in which someone lives. The thesis contends that when framed in this way, emergency food provision may have a role to play – a progressive one, as social movements calling for the prevention of hunger and progressive realisation of the right, as opposed to propelling ad hoc initiatives aimed at protecting people against hunger when it occurs.

Just as the issues at stake are not simply about protection, but also prevention, the question of solutions is not simply focused on issues of welfare or issues of food. It is not simply about the provision of food or welfare, it is about more than this, about rights and progressive approaches to realising them (which see the state as a key but not the only part of the debate), with onus placed on everyone – citizens, states, private and charitable sectors.

The thesis makes a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the areas of emergency food provision, food poverty and food rights in a UK context. It forms one of the first major systematic studies of these emergent systems with emphasis from the unique perspective of the nature of the systems and the implications of their rise – rather than simply charting drivers of growth. It also applies to the emergency food phenomenon a theoretical and analytical framework based on the human right to food, which no study has yet done in the UK.

### **Tensions explored in the thesis**

In studying such a new and complex phenomenon the thesis will necessarily explore various tensions and contradictions. There are, however, four in particular which shape the research and the nature of this thesis namely: the tension between food seen as a market good and as a social good at the same time; the call for emphasis on prevention of hunger in the context of a study of a protective initiative; the question of whether the issues at the heart of need for emergency food are ones of food or, instead, of poverty; and the goodwill and justice-based motivations embedded in emergency food charity against the ways in which they fit into commercial and neo-liberal agendas.

The first key tension within this thesis, arising from the structure of the food system in the UK and the emphasis being placed in the study on the notion of social acceptability, lies in the fact that food is both a social and a market good. Bengtsson's (2001) study of the social right to housing provides important comparative insight on this point. As Bengtsson (2001, p257) observes for housing:

'housing is seen not only as an important element of citizen's welfare, but also – and perhaps above all – as a market good over which consumer preferences should rule'.

This tension is apparent within and between both empirical parts of the thesis. In the first part of the thesis, the notion of adequate, socially acceptable food experiences leads the study to emphasise commercial food systems and shopping for food as key to socially acceptable food

experiences; which therefore emphasises the market qualities of food. In the second part of the thesis, particularly in the chapter on the welfare state, the emphasis placed on the state as duty bearer and on the prevention and protection from hunger as a public good emphasises the social importance of food.

Reconciling this tension is a key driver of the study – through the employment of the right to food framework. In the case of housing, the policy theories which have developed around this tension, Bengtsson (2001, p.260; p257) observes, see housing as a right but a right that should be exercised 'in the market' and the policies which are developed in response focus on providing 'correctives to the housing market'. Such correctives can be justified, he argues, where two conditions are met: that the commodity is of 'great importance to citizens'; and that the 'commodity would not be supplied to all citizens at an acceptable price and quality in an unregulated market' (Bengtsson 2001 p258). Whilst Bengtsson jokes about the idea of intervening in the bread market, it could be argued that food could meet such conditions, given its importance to health and social inclusion on the one hand and the fact that the market is not adequately ensuring the availability and affordability of good quality food for everyone.

Within this framework of response two types of policies are observed by Bengtsson (2001 p261-2): selective policies which relate to notions of safety nets and see housing allocated to those unable to operate in the wider market; and universal policies which 'intervene in the functioning of the general market in order to make it fulfil better the housing needs of all households'. With the rise of emergency food provision what we are seeing is a form of charitable selective response, with some kind of minimum attempting to be provided to those who cannot access food in the market.

Importantly, of course, as Bengtsson (2001) observes, these responses and the approach underpinning it work on the premise that it is accepted that the market is the central mechanism of distribution for housing. Wider conversations could be had about whether contemporary market based distribution of food is just and sustainable now and into the future, but given

the predominance of the commercial food market and of obtaining food through shopping (Meah 2013) the market is the central mechanism for the distribution of food at the time of writing in the UK. It is hoped that the right to food approach posits a possible way forward towards reconciling these issues in such a way that this social good is realised (the human right to food), within the context of corrective market policies.

In the context of the human right to food, the thesis places an emphasis on the necessity of both ways to prevent hunger from occurring and to protect people from it when it does occur. Given the empirical focus on a protective initiative (emergency food provision) the thesis is mindful of a potential tension where attention is shifted away from prevention. The study therefore seeks a balance between the two and explores the link between protective measures and the role they could play in a more comprehensive, progressive approach to the prevention of hunger and realisation of the right to food. This dual emphasis on protection and prevention is embedded throughout the thesis in relation to the theme of adequacy (and the question of how adequate protective responses are) and later on in the thesis in relation to preventative roles all actors have to play including the welfare state, NGO and food industry.

The third tension actually speaks more broadly to the question of the nature of the thesis itself and relates to the question of whether the ‘problem’ at the heart of the emergency food phenomenon (hunger) is in fact a *food* problem or a *poverty* problem. And, beyond that, which is the most helpful and constructive way of talking about it, in the pursuit of the progressive realisation of the human right to food? This also begs a question of whether, in turn, this thesis is a thesis about social policies (prevention and protection from poverty) or about food (its accessibility and availability).

The question of whether we are addressing a food or poverty problem is important given the way in which conceptualisations and definitions can preclude particular responses (see Lister 2004). So, if the thesis frames the problem of hunger as one of food, it could be interpreted that this should be resolved purely by interventions in the food markets and by the provision of

food; as opposed to as part of more holistic poverty responses. There is therefore a practical question which speaks in to how to frame this social science problem in terms of what would give rise to the most constructive responses. The thesis engages with conceptualisations of food poverty which provide broad interpretations and highlight the importance of structural determinants as well as the ways in which the concept interacts with other experiences such as poverty, deprivation and social exclusion. Such conceptualisations point towards holistic progressive responses which see food as one aspect of a wider struggle.

The tension of 'food or poverty' is lived out in both empirical parts of the thesis. In the first part, links are made between the experience of emergency food receipt and the 'otherness' and exclusion of the experiences of poverty. The theme is explored in more detail in the second empirical part of the study. In the chapter on Care (Chapter 6), the question of responding to food poverty by the giving of food and care is explored in depth. This is found to be problematic given the ways in which these social actions cannot address underpinning causes of this experience (income and food system structure). In the final empirical chapter (Chapter 7), on the welfare state, the question of how food is part of the changing nature of the state response is explored. In the UK food is covered as part of the social security payments given in monetary value. Aside from top-up food initiatives (such as healthy start vouchers or free school meals), there are no explicitly food based social security payments or in-kind provision in the UK. This is important in understanding how the UK government see food and social security – money is given for costs of living; not separately for particular parts of household expenditure (apart from housing costs in the form of housing benefit).

Social policy research and theories are therefore as much at the heart of this thesis as food poverty and human rights research. This multidisciplinary approach (a geographical and social policy study of emergency food provision) helps the research draw on the most advanced and innovative research from a variety of perspectives. These multidisciplinary insights are drawn on throughout the thesis. To frame the study theoretically, the research draws on both social policy and human rights thinking. Set out in



the theory chapter (Chapter 2), the distinction between human rights and citizen's rights (traditionally used in social policy research) is a key aspect to understanding the approach to the right to food embedded within the thesis. Similarly, in the chapters on the welfare state (Chapter 7) and also caring (Chapter 6) the role that social policy research ascribes to the state (normatively), alongside other social actors and structures is formative for the thesis, enabling it to speak with more nuance about the proactive and more complex role of the state within the rights context which sees it as 'duty bearer'. Poverty research is also drawn on in theoretical and empirical chapters in the thesis. Lister's (2004) and Townsend's (1979) work are both used to inform the conceptualisation and definition of food poverty and parallels with wider poverty approaches are discussed.

The fourth and final tension in the thesis is perhaps the most normative. This surrounds the contradictions and tensions present between the goodwill and justice framings built into emergency food charities on the one hand and the ways in which these charities fit within neo-liberal and commercial agendas on the other. Emergency food projects embody numerous social performances, motivations and interactions and as such could be the focus of a vast range of social science research questions. Necessarily, in answering different research questions researchers would come to differing views on the nature of the provision and the ways in which it should be celebrated or criticised. For research focused on volunteer experiences, social capital, expressions of neighbourliness and compassion such projects represent excellent examples of the ways in which local communities respond to need in their area and are often celebrated as such. However, this project is focused on the underpinning phenomenon of food poverty and explores the nature of emergency food systems specifically as a response to these. As was discussed above, such research necessarily engages critically with such systems given the limited impact they can have on the food experiences of the people they help. This is not to criticise or undermine the work being done in local communities – rather it involves asking bigger questions of other stakeholders and situating such provision within a wider context of responses. Some may suggest that such analyses are luxurious;

that whilst volunteers in local communities are working hard to keep projects going and to help those in need they don't have the time to ask such big, abstract questions. But these are critical questions nonetheless which policy makers and other stakeholders in the voluntary and community sector are seeking answers to.

To critically assess this charitable food movement in the context of the right to food is therefore not to dismiss the moral imperatives and level of volunteer and donor time and commitment which goes into them. The case study organisations and many other charities and initiatives across the country represent significant amounts of goodwill, time, financial and emotional investment and the generosity and compassion of everyone who participates in them (from donors to volunteers). I have been moved by the amount of compassion and care that I have seen at work in these initiatives and certainly do not set out to undermine the endeavour. However as will be discussed in the empirical parts of this thesis they also embody the neo-liberal (welfare retrenchment, insecure and low paid jobs) and commercial (dominance of a small number of large food retailers) processes which bring about the hunger to which they are a response. Finding a constructive way of articulating critical engagement with the emergency food phenomenon has been an important aspect of this research and the many other publications and presentations that I have done over the last three years.

### **Thesis outline**

The thesis is comprised of a theoretical chapter (Chapter 2) and methodology chapter (Chapter 3) which are followed by two empirical sections each comprising two empirical chapters (Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7) with a final Conclusion chapter (Chapter 8) bringing the thesis to a close. This section of the introduction outlines how the thesis progresses and the key issues that are addressed and arguments that are set out in each of the chapters.

## Chapter 2: Theorising the food poverty 'problem' and the right to food 'solution'

This chapter sets out the key theories with which the thesis engages, the theoretical issues it addresses and the theoretical framework which guides the thesis in its analysis. It begins by setting out conceptualisations and definitions of two of the key issues explored in the thesis – food poverty and the human right to food. The relationship between the two is also outlined here, with 'food poverty' used to refer to the problem underpinning need for emergency food and the 'right to food' employed as a way of framing the solution as a broader rights-based social ethic.

The right to food is then comprehensively introduced and the specific way in which it guides the analysis is outlined. The emphasis on the normative element of 'adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access' and on the state's obligation to 'respect, protect and fulfil the right to food' are justified in terms of their relevance to the issues under study – the potential 'other'ness of these systems on the one hand and the way in which they represent citizens, rather than the state, taking responsibility for protecting people from hunger on the other. The distinction between human and citizen's rights is also outlined in this chapter, and the justification of a human-rights based approach outlined on the basis of the universality of human compared to civic rights (the latter based on citizenship), the way in which human rights approaches draw on many conceptual tools beyond 'equity' (such as dignity, acceptability and adequacy) and the emphasis placed by human rights on states as duty bearers.

The last part of the chapter sets out the specific theoretical framework which is used to guide the analysis of empirical data and to structure the rest of the thesis. In exploring the normative content of the right to food (adequate and sustainable availability and accessibility of food) theories of 'othering' and 'agency' are employed to assess the social acceptability of emergency food systems as a means of acquiring food and the power of providers to make sufficient food available through these systems and of potential recipients to access it. In exploring the obligations and violations inherent within the right

(specifically the states obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right), theories of 'care' and 'social protection' are employed to explore the ways in which charitable providers are in practice taking responsibility for this duty and how shifts in welfare policy are affecting need for this provision.

### Chapter 3: Methodology.

The methodology chapter outlines the methods which were employed to collect the data and the approach to analysis that was used. In the first instance the chapter puts the research into the context of other work I have undertaken prior to and during the three years of doctoral study. It introduces the two case study organisations – the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare – and justifies their selection in detail. A full account of the qualitative case study methodology is given including information on the local projects visited and the specific interviews which were undertaken. The chapter ends with reflections on some of the key challenges that were faced during the process of the research including the rapidly changing nature of the case study organisations and the evolving political context.

Three themes frame the rest of the thesis which progresses in the following way. The theme of adequacy frames the first empirical part of the thesis which comprises of two chapters (4 and 5). The theme of responsibility frames the second empirical part of the thesis which also comprises two chapters (6 and 7). The theme of 'opportunities in the context of crisis' frames the thesis conclusion (Chapter 8).

#### *Empirical Part 1*

*Adequacy: The acceptability and sustainability of emergency food systems.*

The theme of adequacy frames the first empirical part of the thesis. In particular, the notion of an adequate food experience. What this looks like in

practice is discussed further in the section on the concept, definition and measurement of food poverty (in Chapter 2) but the research takes as a premise that the notion of an adequate food experience incorporates the necessity of adequate income (in order to access food) but also incorporates more than this, including the ideas of socially acceptable food experiences and that food is part of participation in society. This approach is very much modelled on the approach to poverty that Townsend outlines (as Riches discusses in his 1997 article).

If understanding the idea of 'adequate' food experiences is premised on social acceptability, two key mechanisms to how these experiences are reached are therefore assumed. On the one hand, people must have adequate incomes to economically access a socially acceptable diet and on the other, the mechanisms of food availability (how and what food is available to them) must be socially acceptable and adequate. Whilst the latter is the focus of this section of the thesis, these mechanisms both, in turn, enable the possibility for social inclusion through food.

The importance of financial security to enabling adequate food experiences incorporates issues of the political-economy of low pay; levels of social security; and, ultimately the question of what constitutes an adequate income. A poverty and income adequacy emphasis would enable emphasis to be placed on income standards (both in and out of work) and what constitutes a minimum (Hirsch 2013). When out of work benefits and even minimum wages do not provide the income required to obtain minimally acceptable standards of living, food security will be compromised and a trip to the food bank never too far away.

However, the issue of adequacy is seen in this thesis as more than adequate incomes, to also incorporate wider issues of the structure of the food system, consumer assumptions and expectations in these markets and the commensality of food. Importantly the focus of the theme of adequacy in this thesis is on the adequacy of emergency food provision as a system of food acquisition, both in terms of its social acceptability (Chapter 4) and sustainability as a system (Chapter 5). It is not within the remit of this

research to explore the adequacy of the food provided by these organisations. This is a systems-based analysis with a focus upon the experience of these systems from the perspectives of providers and recipients. The nutrient content or quantity of food that is provided within these systems is beyond the scope of the research.

This first empirical part of the thesis therefore explores the adequacy of emergency food provision by looking at the nature of the case study organisations in relation to questions of acceptability and sustainability. Specifically:

#### Chapter 4. Emergency food provision: an 'other' system?

This chapter explores the notion of adequacy in relation to how socially acceptable emergency food provision is as a means of food acquisition. This acceptability is explored through the notion of 'otherness' and questions around the nature of emergency food as an 'other' system and whether it is experienced as such by recipients. As will be discussed in the theoretical chapter (Chapter 2), acceptability is taken as a relative term in the right to food framework. This chapter (Chapter 4) will outline the most common socially acceptable mechanism of obtaining food in the UK today, namely through commercial markets and shopping for food.

On the basis of the data collected this chapter finds the following. Firstly, emergency food provision can be said to form an identifiably other system given the ways in which it lacks key features of shopping in the commercial market: food is largely sourced for and exclusively acquired from outside the marketplace and recipients lack (consumer or citizenship) rights within these systems.

The findings presented in this chapter do, however, indicate that these systems and the food distributed through them do still hold moral and market-based aspects which could be of value. Particularly from the perspective of those working for the case study organisations or donating into them, moral imperatives can be said to drive the emergency food

endeavours and be enacted by the performance of projects – to feed the hungry; to share God’s love; and to prevent food being wasted. Drawing on the work of Midgley (2013) the chapter also observes the market based qualities that surplus food in particular retains even when it enters into redistribution systems – such as branding.

Ultimately, however, the chapter finds that emergency food systems are not only identifiably other but experientially so as well. Based on data collected and drawing on the work of others the chapter ends by arguing that these systems are experienced as ‘other’ by those that have to turn to them and it is the experience of this ‘other’ system as exclusionary which is problematic from the perspective of adequacy. Feelings of embarrassment and stigma, the religious materiality of the spaces in which this food is often provided, and discourses of ‘the hungry’ could all serve to alienate those in need of assistance with food.

## Chapter 5. Power and Agency in Emergency Food Provision

This chapter explores adequacy in relation to the sustainability of the availability and accessibility of food through emergency food systems. It focuses on the sustainability of both the availability of food to emergency food providers and the accessibility of that food to potential recipients. As will be outlined in the theory chapter (Chapter 2) the ‘sustainability’ standard set out by the right to food stipulates that access to food must be sustained now and into the future – a concept which extends to future generations. For this thesis, particular emphasis is placed on the sustainability of food access into the relatively near future (this week, month, next month, next year).

Assessing this short-term sustainability, this chapter explores both the availability of food (to emergency food providers) and its accessibility (to recipients).

Through an analysis of empirical data drawing on a particular theory of power (as the ability to exercise agency) this chapter first of all explores the agency of emergency food providers to make food available. The findings

indicate that the agency of providers is constrained in significant ways by the structure of the food industry; a structure which also dominates approaches to corporate partnership development and future planning.

The agency of people in need of emergency food to access the food which is available is the focus of the second half of the chapter. The findings presented in this part highlight that agency is highly constrained both in terms of agency in accessing the projects and agency within the projects. Practicalities involved in accessing emergency food projects in the first place can form specific barriers (such as referral practices or opening times). But once within these systems agency can also be constrained by the lack of recipient rights, rules relating to the amount of food someone can receive and the lack of accountability of providers.

The sustainability of emergency food provision in terms of the availability of food through these systems and access to that food by people in need therefore appears to be particularly vulnerable. The agency of both emergency food providers and their recipients are constrained by the structures in which they operate (the food system and emergency food systems) and their ability to access the amount of food they require is ultimately determined by these structures.

## *Empirical Part 2*

*Responsibility: respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to food.*

Responsibility is the theme that frames the second empirical part of this thesis, specifically in the form of the question ‘whose responsibility is it to pursue the progressive realisation of the right to food?’ The right to food approach sees a role for everyone in the realisation of this right, but sees the state as duty-bearer (Hosie and Lamb 2013).

However, what we have been seeing in recent years, particularly in the context of welfare reforms and welfare state shifts, is increasing individualisation of risk and emphasis on individuals, families and



communities to respond to poverty and other need; that is, increasing emphasis on communitarian forms of social solidarity (see Ellison and Fenger 2013). As will be discussed in the empirical chapter (Chapter 7) on emergency food provision and the welfare state these shifts have been said to be embodied within the emergency food phenomenon, particularly in the form of food banks (see Ellison and Fenger 2013). And, more broadly, that these key shifts in responsibility are embedded within the simultaneous proliferation and reliance on food charity and stringent and wide ranging cuts to social security and services.

This part of the thesis critically engages with the emergency food phenomenon and explores where responsibilities lie in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human right to food. Specifically it looks at the roles of food charity and the state:

#### Chapter 6. Emergency food provision within a critical ethic of care

This chapter looks at where emergency food provision as charitable provision fits into responsibilities to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food. It looks at the emergency food providers as the actors who are performing caring in the current context and considers normative questions in terms of who should be doing such caring.

This chapter employs a theory of care ethics ('a critical ethic of care and responsibility' (Lawson 2007, p.2) to explore the data collected in order to understand the nature of need for emergency food provision on the one hand and how providers define success within these systems. The findings suggest that whilst need and success are often spoken of in immediate terms (crisis and meeting immediate need) this in fact belies the more nuanced appreciation organisations have for the complex circumstances which underpin need for emergency food and how they understand the impact of their projects on recipients' lives. The care ethics approach enables us to see how experiences of need and the outcomes of caring through emergency food provision are in fact multi-sited. Notions of acute need sit on a wider

context of mild and moderate need and experiences of financial insecurity and precarity. Similarly, caring within emergency food systems occurs at many sites (inter-personal, project and community level) and is also situated at one of many sites at which people in poverty may be cared for (within social networks, other community initiatives, national social security as so on).

The chapter goes on to discuss the ways in which emergency food providers are assuming responsibility for caring for the hungry with mixed feelings. It places these findings within the context of care ethics approaches which see care as structural and public and discusses how these endeavours could be interpreted as privatised care, fitting within wider neo-liberal shifts. The multi-sited approach comes in handy once again here, however, and highlights the ways in which these organisations navigate the contested space between privatised caring in the community and public responses (in terms of policy making) and points to the importance of campaigning, advocacy and political action.

The chapter concludes that care ethics highlight the importance of social and structural caring – that care should not be relinquished by society in favour of ad hoc, marginalised charitable responses in the context of prevailing rhetoric about ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ people and increasingly personalised interpretations of poverty. Yet the right to food framework also indicates a role for emergency food providers, in relation to working within these multiple layers of caring, speaking into broader structures and holding other actors to account.

## Chapter 7. Emergency food provision and the changing welfare state

This chapter looks at the particular role of the state in relation to food poverty and emergency food provision. In particular it examines the changing nature of the UK welfare state and the impact these changes are having on the need for and shape of emergency food provision.

The findings presented highlight that social security and on-going reforms to it are impacting on need for emergency food in two key ways: through changes to the levels of entitlement (such as caps to entitlement, changes to annual uprating); and problematic administrative processes (delays, arbitrary sanctioning decisions, fitness assessments which are overturned on appeal).

The findings also indicate that the consequences of welfare reforms are impacting on the nature of these systems. In particular as the level of need is driven up projects are re-considering their operations, contemplating logistics and means of protecting projects' access to food. At a local level, particular reforms appear to be embedding local welfare systems which increasingly incorporate local food projects – in the case of the Local Welfare Assistance schemes, when people are turned down for a crisis loan they may as a matter of increasing routine be referred to a foodbank, embedding projects within these systems.

The consequences of these impacts are discussed in the chapter and the future relationship between food banks in particular and the welfare state are considered. Two particular scenarios are discussed: that foodbanks and projects like them becoming increasingly part of local welfare systems where the state is still proactively (albeit in a more limited way) involved in services or emergency social security loans locally; or that foodbanks alongside other charitable initiatives come to work in the absence of the state in local communities where the state continues to withdraw state funded services in favour of community-based responses and local authorities shut down local welfare assistance schemes after national funding is stopped in April 2015.

The question of state as duty bearer is considered to conclude the chapter and the role of the state in aspects other than welfare is discussed. By right to food standards the welfare state could be considered a vital aspect to both fulfilling and protecting people's right but the state's role is much broader, encompassing action in relation to labour markets, commercial food markets and other spheres where it could exercise influence to respect and protect people's human right.

### *Conclusion: Identifying opportunities in crisis*

The theme which frames the concluding chapter in the thesis (Chapter 8) is that of 'opportunities in crisis'. This theme provides inspiration for the close of the research and drives the thesis conclusion with the following question: 'in the face of food poverty and a faltering safety net what can be *done*?'

This approach is drawn from Townsend's notion of a researcher's duty not just to identify needs but to go on to suggest how they might be met (Townsend 2009). As one of the first studies into the phenomenon of growing emergency food provision in the UK it would be easy to fall into the social science habit of problematizing without suggesting solutions. Yet, the theories, writings and empirical evidence at the study's disposal all provide visions and notions of ways forward to draw on. Indeed the very urgency and level of suffering embodied in the situation of rising food poverty and increased reliance on emergency food charity makes this role for research all the more urgent.

Therefore, the close of this thesis aims to provide ways of thinking in terms of possible futures, as well as tangible steps to get us there. As Farnsworth and Irving (2011b) discuss, it is possible to see opportunities arising out of the current crisis (their work talked about welfare crisis):

'challenging times are as likely to widen the scope of progressive welfare-state building as they are to diminish it' (Farnsworth and Irving 2011b, p278)

### Chapter 8. Implications for realising the right to food in the UK

The conclusion chapter therefore focuses on the consequences of the rise of emergency food provision – and the findings presented in the thesis – for the progressive realisation of the human right to food in the UK. In the first instance the chapter discusses the opportunities that the right to food approach provides and its appropriateness in the current context. Given the increasingly lean nature of the welfare state and plethora of agents involved in policy making, employing the right to food as a social ethic which drives

policies and partnerships towards its realisation and thus moving beyond a sole emphasis on the state is arguably a particularly constructive way forward. The chapter sets out three key conclusions.

1. The first conclusion is that there is a need to challenge minimalist approaches to the definition of food poverty, ways in which responses are framed and solutions understood. The findings of the research show that the adequacy of food is about much more than nutritional intake and is also about the social acceptability of food acquisition and the longevity of access to it. Furthermore, even when talking about 'crisis' need for emergency food provision the circumstances being referred to are often, in fact, situated within a broader experience of vulnerability and poverty. Wider conceptualisations which take account of the importance of vulnerability to food poverty, social acceptability, social inclusion and the facilitative nature of food experiences should therefore be favoured over reductionist interpretations.

2. The second conclusion is that rights-based policies would be a vital part of the progressive realisation of the right to food in the UK. As the research findings demonstrate, the retrenchment of the welfare state and increasing reliance on emergency food systems are both highly problematic from the right to food perspective. Policy frameworks premised on the human right to food could provide important ways of enacting the right to food and moving the United Kingdom towards its realisation. States, as duty-bearers, could implement policies 'parented' by the right to food, which provide the space and opportunity for all stakeholders to enact their responsibilities in the progressive realisation of the right to food.

3. The third conclusion relates to the important social and political role emergency food charities could have in the realisation of the right to food. Given the room made for civil society in the right to food (albeit with a lack of prescription on how this works) and the limitations of emergency food provision from a rights perspective, perhaps we need to reimagine the role of food charity. A role as one not of food but one which relates to the social and political contribution this provision does and could make. The findings of the

research suggests that perhaps the main role food charity could have in realising the right to food is not through the provision itself, which is necessarily limited, but through the support networks which are facilitated locally (through signposting) and the power of the evidence gathered nationally and the collective voice the organisations have (together with other NGOs and church leaders) to speak into political processes which could make a difference in realising this right.

The conclusion chapter ends with recommendations for a range of stakeholders including emergency food charities, policy makers, NGOs, the food industry, communities and individuals and researchers.

### **Contribution to knowledge**

This thesis will make a considerable and original contribution to knowledge in several important areas. In the first instance it provides one of the first and most comprehensive studies of emergency food systems in the United Kingdom. In the current context of heightened interest from policy makers, the media and the public it forms a timely intervention providing insights on how the organisations work, what motivates them and how they believe they impact on the lives of those they help.

The thesis also advances – theoretically and empirically – the right to food approach in the UK context. The rights based approach has so far been significantly under-utilised in UK research and policy making and this thesis provides a practical application of the theoretical basis of this human right. In doing so it also advances thinking on the right to food, identifying and analytically applying key concepts (othering, agency, care and social protection) which can be used to explore the content of the right. Whilst theories of agency and othering are shown to help shed light on the normative content, theories of care and social protection are also shown to further knowledge relating to the obligations that the right to food places on states to protect, respect and fulfil the right. Care ethics is also shown to help further the understanding of multi-scalar and multi-sited phenomena such as

emergency food provision, enabling in this thesis an exploration of the tensions and contradictions inherent within the provision.

In making these specific contributions to knowledge the research speaks into both food systems research and social policy research. It provides an in-depth account of an emerging phenomenon in the UK food system – the provision of emergency food to people in need who would otherwise be unable to feed themselves and their families by charities on a national scale. The thesis provides food research with an analysis of the power dynamics embedded within this new element in the food system, both in terms of charities' ability to make food available in the context of the commercial food market and the ability of those people who are excluded from that commercial food market to access the emergency food charity that is made available. At a time of significant change and shifts in social policy the research also provides an important exploration of the role played by welfare retrenchment and the ever-more diversified ways in which people living in poverty are cared for. It reveals the symbiotic nature of the relationship between the withdrawal and retrenchment of the welfare state and the growth in the provision of and need for emergency food.

## Chapter 2

### Theorising the Food Poverty ‘Problem’ and the Right to Food ‘Solution’

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This chapter sets out the theories with which the thesis engages and outlines the theoretical and analytical framework which guides the research and analysis. It presents particular theories of food poverty and the right to food. These identify food poverty as a specific way of interpreting the ‘problem’ which leads people to seek assistance from emergency food providers; and the right to food as a way of envisaging not just the solution to these experiences but a more comprehensive approach to the realisation of socially just food experiences for all.

As highlighted in the introduction chapter (Chapter 1) above, the right to food has not been systematically applied to the phenomenon of emergency food provision in the United Kingdom so far, so developing a theoretical framework is a key contribution of the research and an important first step. This chapter will introduce the right to food, its historical context and the UK’s relationship to it. It will go on to highlight key aspects of this right which are particularly helpful in guiding this research on emergency food provision. Both the normative content of the right and the obligations and violations which it sets out play a role in framing the rest of the thesis, in particular normative stipulations around the adequacy, acceptability and sustainability of food and access to it and the obligation placed on states to respect, protect and fulfil the human right.

Before turning to the substantive right to food content, the chapter begins by outlining a theory of food poverty. Terminology surrounding food poverty, food insecurity and hunger are not necessarily clearly defined, widely used or understood in the UK so another contribution and aim of this chapter is to set out a clear conceptualisation and definition of the problem of food poverty. This theoretical approach is informed not just by previous work on food



poverty and food insecurity but also by theoretical work on poverty itself, particularly the work of Lister (2004).

Importantly, this chapter also sets out the relationship between food poverty and the human right to food, which is not always clear. In exploring the rise of emergency food provision in the UK, the thesis draws on theories of food poverty to understand and interpret need for emergency food and for the purposes of the research places this within the context of the right to food framework. Put another way, the concept of food poverty is employed to understand the ‘problem’ and its determinants – how need for emergency food provision manifests itself – and the right to food is used as a framework for a progressive way forward for overcoming it.

As outlined further along in this chapter, other concepts are also incorporated which have particularly subtle relationships to the right to food framework. For example, the notion of ‘food *in*security’, as will be shown, can help us to understand the problem of food poverty, and whilst the notion of ‘food security’ is a pre-requisite for the realisation of the right to food, actually, the progressive realisation of this right incorporates much more as will be discussed; so whilst food security might be understood as the aim for overcoming food poverty, actually the premise of this thesis is that a much broader interpretation of the problem, its determinants and its solution is required.

In the first instance then, the chapter begins with a section on theorising food poverty. This sets out the particular conceptualisation and definition of food poverty on which the research draws. The chapter moves on to introduce the right to food, setting out in general terms what it encompasses and how it has been used in other global north contexts. The rationale for adopting a human rights based approach as opposed to a citizens’ rights-based approach – as is found in much social policy research – is then discussed as well as some of the key challenges and ways around these that the right to food poses in terms of driving research with practical and achievable applications.

The chapter ends by outlining how the right to food provides a specific analytical framework for the rest of the thesis. Two particular aspects of the right to food are focussed upon - notably issues of adequacy, acceptability and sustainability and the state's obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the right. These two elements are explored through utilising several concepts and theories for framing the analysis of empirical data: othering, agency, care and social protection. By employing these concepts the thesis engages food poverty and the right to food with literatures on exclusion, power, care ethics and welfare states.

### **A theory of food poverty**

The first challenge faced by a study such as this is the variety of, sometimes overlapping, language used to describe the experience of lack of access to food. 'Hunger', 'food poverty' and 'food insecurity' are all utilised and recently food poverty and insecurity have become to be used interchangeably in the UK (see Dowler and O'Connor 2012). The idea of food poverty arguably has more resonance in the UK when applied to household level experiences (see academic work by Dowler et al 2001, Hitchman et al 2002, Lang et al 2010 among many and Cooper and Dumpleton 2013, BBC News 2014 and Oxfam 2013). 'Food security' on the other hand has often been used to refer to national food supply issues and global or national food systems, rather than lived household experiences particularly by UK government (see discussion in Kneafsey et al 2013). In order to critically engage with the notion of need for emergency food provision in the form of food poverty, the work of Ruth Lister (2004) in conceptualising poverty is drawn on here, as it provides a particularly critical way of thinking about conceptualisations, definitions and measurements of such a social problems.

In terms of conceptualising the lived experience of food poverty, three principles for understanding food poverty as a concept are drawn as parallels to Lister's (2004) conceptualisation of poverty. In the first instance, following Riches (1997), this thesis sees food poverty as being, like poverty, a 'construction of specific societies' (Lister 2004, p3). It is understood as a

relative concept, but one which, like Townsend's interpretation of poverty, can be 'defined objectively and applied consistently' (1979, p31). Food poverty is also seen as a 'dynamic process rather than a fixed state' (Lister 2004, p157) embodying as it does complex interacting processes which are operating at every scale from the global to the inter-personal and being played out in ever-shifting lived realities. Finally, the conceptualisation of food poverty offered here also takes account of the 'multifarious ways in which [food] poverty is experienced' (Lister 2004, p176). How it is experienced over time, by different people between households and within households, at different life stages, in the context of different tastes, preferences and health circumstances are just a few of many factors which mean that experiences of food poverty are lived in different and complex ways. This emphasis on lived experiences also highlights how the experience is lived beyond the individual and family, and into wider social interactions – the role of food in social inclusion (being able to have friends or family around for tea and biscuits; sending a child to school with a packed lunch which is similar to their friends') are all important ways in which food poverty contributes to experiences of social exclusion.

In defining food poverty it is possible to defend the selection of the 'food poverty' concept over others (namely hunger, nutrition insecurity and food insecurity). Hunger – like malnourishment or nutrition insecurity – are seen, for the purposes of this research to be tied up with physical, biological states. The importance of social dynamics and processes, inherent within the conceptualisation outlined above, mean that an alternative definition and approach are required.

The definition of food insecurity utilised by the Food and Agriculture Organisation is, despite reference to food preference, still relatively narrow for the purposes of this study (World Food Summit, 1996 cited in FAO 2006):

'Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life'.

Food poverty, on the other hand, has been defined in such a way to incorporate wider processes, which is particularly helpful for the purposes of this research:

‘The inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so’ (see Dowler et al 2001, p.2 and taken from Radimer et al 1992 cited in Riches 1997)

Food poverty, in the form of this particular definition, is utilised for the purposes of this study for understanding the problem driving need for emergency food provision. This definition is particularly helpful given the ways in which it emphasises social dimensions of acceptability as well as experiences of insecurity into the longer term. Experiences of food poverty are seen through this interpretation as more than a symptom of poverty; they are treated as a site of analysis in their own right, as a set of experiences which both result from and contribute to social exclusion and injustice.

Aspects of this definition which are seen to be particularly important for the purposes of this research are: the underpinning defining aspect of lack of *access* to food, broadly defined to incorporate physical and economic access; notions of *adequacy and acceptability* which are key themes in both the thesis and the normative content of the right to food framework; and *security* over time, requiring this access now and into the short and longer term future. Less so than food security definitions which are explicitly measured in terms of ‘mild, moderate and acute’ levels, but this definition of food poverty could still encapsulate the notion of levels of severity; a notion which is particularly helpful given the broad conceptualisation outlined above.

An additional, more practical factor to consider for the purposes of this research is that food poverty and the definition provided above could help to set out a clearer understanding of the ‘problem’ (of food poverty) and the solution (as pursuing the right to food), when compared to the slightly more overlapping relationship between food security and the right to food – where food security is a necessary pre-requisite of but not sufficient for the realisation of the right to food.

Embedded in this definition are interpretations of key questions about the nature of the 'problem', namely: whether is it an issue of structure or agency; a question of poverty or food; or whether it is interpreted narrowly or broadly. The interpretation offered in this definition for the purposes of this thesis is that food poverty is an experience determined by structural forces including the food production and retail system, the labour market, the welfare state and transport, housing and planning infrastructures. As with structural definitions of poverty, to emphasise the importance of structure 'does not necessarily write human agency out' (Lister 2004, p51). Indeed there are many ways in which agency can be recognised, valued and accounted for in such interpretations, which are drawn on here. Those experiencing food poverty can be seen as active agents within this experience; whilst their agency may be constrained by the structural determinants of their food experiences notions of 'personal agency' (alongside Lister's 2004 notions of political and citizenship agencies) and the ways in which people 'get by' in these circumstances can be accounted for. Such an approach sees the structure / agency issue as:

'people experiencing poverty are actors in their own lives, but within the bounds of frequently formidable and oppressive structural and cultural constraints, which are themselves the product of other's agency' (Lister 2004, p157)

One of the key tensions outlined in the Introduction chapter (Chapter 1) which are embedded throughout this thesis is the question of whether the 'problem' that emergency food organisations are responding to is one of food or of poverty. The definition of food poverty adopted for this research inevitably embodies this question and so it is worth exploring here briefly. The definition provided above could actually be said to leave this 'food or poverty' question open. The ways in which a variety of issues of access are incorporated and emphasis is placed on social acceptability and socially defined adequacy could readily be said to fit within wider notions of relative poverty and socially defined minimum living standards or – equally – to emphasise the issue of access to and provision of food.

Food poverty, understood in this way, is seen to have several key determinants, drawing on extensive research and evidence (for example Caraher et al 1998; Dowler 2003, Hitchman et al 2002). Some of this is reviewed in Lambie-Mumford et al (2014) and Lambie-Mumford (2013B). Key structural barriers to food access are identified in this body of literature as including income levels, food prices, and retail and transport infrastructures (see Lambie-Mumford 2013B). Income levels and costs of living (including food prices but also housing and energy costs) appear to be particularly important on the basis of contemporary research on food and poverty and food experiences in the context of the recent recession (see the review in Lambie-Mumford et al 2014).

In terms of translating this definition into a measurement, this is where we run into difficulty in the UK context. The experience of food poverty has not been measured by either government or researchers systematically and over time in the UK. One study was done of low income households in the form of the Low Income Diet and Nutrition Survey in the early 2000s (Nelson et al 2007). In the absence of agreed measures of food poverty, some commentators are drawing on numbers relating to food aid uptake as proxy indicators of this wider phenomenon. This is problematic for several key reasons: these numbers only account for those that visited projects, not those in equal need who did not or could not access such provision; where need is defined as 'crisis' or 'acute' food poverty, these numbers do not account for those people experiencing mild or moderate food poverty; and they do not convey how many times people are helped (so, on the one hand they cannot account for repeat visits so we cannot know how many individuals were helped but on the other where projects may stop helping after a few parcels they do not say how many more times those people might have needed help but couldn't access it). Whilst it is a question outside the scope of the thesis, systematically measuring food poverty could be done, drawing on tested methodologies such as those used in the US (Bickel et al 2000) or Canada (Health Canada, no date) for levels of food security and would also enable the identification of mild and moderate experiences and capture those in acute food poverty not accessing emergency provision.

The conceptualisation of food poverty utilised for this thesis, then, encapsulates a broad notion of a dynamic process, one that is experienced differently by different people who have active agency in how they manage their lives within the structural determinants constraining their food experiences. Ultimately, food poverty is understood as relative to different societies and as a construct of those societies. This conceptualisation has been actioned within the context of this thesis by the definition offered by Dowler et al (2001); a definition which takes account of the key composite dynamics of access (broadly defined), acceptability and adequacy, and security in the longer term. It is a definition which highlights the importance of food for social participation and the value of aspirations and equity. Whilst measurement of food poverty is not the focus of this thesis some reflection on this process has been offered above and the need for adequate systematic and robust measures has been discussed in more depth in related work (Lambie-Mumford and Dowler forthcoming 2014, Lambie-Mumford 2014B).

The following section will explore the approach to the right to food which is adopted in the context of this study. But by way of linking and making clear the relationship between the two (which will be explored in more detail in the next section) food poverty is understood here as a conceptualisation and definition of the problem underlying need for emergency food provision. Overcoming this is necessary for realising the right to food but the human rights approach incorporates something more than this notion of equity. Access to a socially acceptable food experience for all (the abolition of food poverty) is understood in the context of an understanding of food and the human right to food as a social ethic; as a commitment to this right which in itself is seen as a social good. The right to food is both an aim and an ethic and, whilst the elimination of food poverty is a pre-requisite it does not as will be explored now, comprise the whole right to food approach.

## **The Human Right to Food**

The right to adequate food was originally enshrined in Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (ratified in 1948) as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, which incorporated adequate food (UN no date). As part of the range of economic, social and cultural rights the right to food was not ratified by states – including the United Kingdom – until the mid-1970s in the form of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (published in 1966) (UN 2014, OHCHR 1996 and Joint Committee on Human Rights 2004). Since then, work on the particularities of the right was published by the UN Economic and Social Council in 1999, specifically in the form of General Comment 12 on the Right to Adequate Food (UNESCO 1999). There has also been the development of Voluntary Guidelines in support of the realisation of the right to food (FAO 2005) and, since the first appointment in 2000, the right to food has had a dedicated UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food (SR Food, no date).

General Comment 12 adopted by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights outlines some of the ‘principal issues’ which the committee considers to be important in relation to the ‘right to adequate food’ (UNESCO 1999). The committee sees the human right to food as being ‘of crucial importance for the enjoyment of all rights’ and elaborates in this publication on both the normative content and obligations and violations of the right.

The normative content found in Comment 12 outlines that (UNESCO 1999):

‘The right to adequate food is realised when every man, woman and child, alone or in community with others, have physical and economic access at all times to adequate food or means for its procurement’

Despite close links to the FAO (2006) food security definition the normative content of the right to food is interpreted as much broader, with an emphasis placed on the ‘*adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access*’.

These are interpreted in specific ways by Comment 12:

‘The precise meaning of “adequacy” is to a large extent determined by prevailing social, economic, cultural, climatic, ecological and other conditions, while “sustainability” incorporates the notion of long-term availability and accessibility’



In elaborating further on these two guiding normative principles, (in addition to nutrition and food safety-specific content which is beyond the scope of the research), the normative content of the guidelines place emphasis on: ‘cultural or consumer acceptability’; the availability of food; and the physical and economic accessibility of food.

In detailing the obligations and violations the right imposes, Comment 12 outlines that the principal obligation of states ‘is to take steps to achieve *progressively* the full realisation of the right to adequate food’. As with all human rights, the right to food imposes three types of obligations on states – to respect, protect and fulfil the right (UNESCO 1999):

‘The obligation to respect existing access to adequate food requires States parties not to take any measures that result in preventing such access.’

‘The obligation to protect requires measures by the State to ensure that enterprises or individuals do not deprive individuals of their access to adequate food.’

‘The obligation to fulfil (facilitate) means the state must pro-actively engage in activities intended to strengthen people’s access to and utilisation of resources and means to ensure their livelihood, including food security. Finally, whenever an individual or group is unable, for reasons beyond their control, to enjoy the right to adequate food by the means at their disposal, States have the obligation to fulfil (provide) that right directly.’

In outlining accountability for the realisation of the right to food the emphasis is necessarily placed upon states given that they are the actors party to the ICESCR. Having said this, Comment 12 (UNESCO 1999) does make room for the role of people, NGOs and the private sector in realising the right to adequate food:

‘While only States are parties to the Covenant and are thus ultimately accountable for compliance with it, all members of society – individuals, families, local communities, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, as well as the private business sector – have responsibilities in the realisation of the right to adequate food. The state should provide an environment that facilitates implementation of these responsibilities.’

Comment 12 (UNESCO 1999) therefore provides an important outline of the detailed content and guiding principles of the right to adequate food. Outlined

here by way of an introduction, the normative content and obligations and violations provide the basis of the theoretical framework used to guide the analysis presented in the thesis and which will be presented in detail in the next section of the chapter.

Whilst the application of the right to food to a study of emergency food provision in the UK context is a key innovation of this thesis, applications to other Global North contexts has a longer history. Riches has long been a proponent of this approach (1999, 2002, 2011) and has written on the implications for Canada and academics elsewhere are now engaging with what a right to food framework might mean in specific country contexts including the US (Chilton and Rose 2009; Anderson 2013) and the UK and Ireland (Dowler and O'Connor 2012, Lambie-Mumford 2013). Whilst there is little recognition and 'considerable resistance' (Dowler and O'Connor 2012, 48) to using rights-based frameworks in overcoming poverty and food insecurity in the UK, such a framework does in fact offer a clear and comprehensive analytical tool through which to explore the rise and implications of emergency food provision in the UK.

Having said this, it is worth exploring why the research is based on human rights specifically, as opposed to rights based on citizenship. Different approaches to the notion of 'rights' offer distinct ways of understanding the normative underpinnings of those rights, utilise different conceptual tools and ascribe responsibilities in particular ways. Importantly given the path this thesis treads between social policy and geographical approaches to the study of food issues, several social policy researchers have noted the different approaches to rights that social policy and human rights researchers have traditionally taken (see Dean 2008; Hosie and Lamb 2013). Notably, social policy research has tended to focus on the notion of citizen's rights – based on Marshall's (1950) work on social citizenship – which incorporates the notion of welfare rights within it (see Dean 2008). This approach is distinct from a human rights approach in several ways. Normatively, the former approach ties rights to citizenship, where human rights are seen as universal (Hosie and Lamb 2013). Conceptually, social policy research is often driven by the notion of equity and whilst there is a strong relationship

between equality and human rights, human rights incorporates other concepts which are significant notably dignity, respect, diversity and autonomy (Hosie and Lamb 2013). Finally these divergent approaches to rights are also said to hold different actors responsible. Whilst human rights identify states as 'duty bearers', social policy research is said to eschew this emphasis on the state and to take greater account of other social actors, relationships and structures (see Hosie and Lamb 2013).

In positioning the approach to rights taken in this thesis, normatively the right to food is seen as a universal (human) right. The notion of such a right being tied to citizenship is seen as problematic, particularly in the context of increasingly mobile populations and the lack of rights ascribed to non-citizens (such as asylum seekers) in these circumstances. Calls for research and emerging evidence relating to destitution within such populations in the UK further problematises this notion when talking about a fundamental right (Crawley et al 2011, JRF no date). The multitude of conceptual tools the right to food approach provides the thesis is also important and it draws on many throughout, with emphasis placed on concepts of dignity, acceptability and adequacy. Finally, in terms of notions of responsibility, the thesis is aligned with the human rights approach to emphasising the role of the state. However, as can be seen in the work of others (such as Sen 2008, also highlighted in UNESCO 1999) a rights approach does also take important account of the role of other actors and structures than states, government and governance. The approach that human rights takes to attributing responsibility and holding actors to account can therefore more appropriately be articulated in terms of the benefits Hosie and Lamb (2013) suggest human rights approaches could bring when combined with social policy approaches – namely strengthening arguments for state accountability – but whilst at the same time seeing a wider role for others.

A number of challenges do face the right to food approach, in terms of putting it into practice. These include the status of this right as part of a 'second generation' of rights; questions about how effective and attainable rights-based approaches are; and tests of feasibility, legality and policy. This section explores these challenges and critically discusses how they might

help to formulate clearer and more articulate framings of what the right to food is and why and how it is appropriate to utilise it in the study of emergency food provision and food poverty in the global north.

The right to food is part of the group of so called 'Economic, Social and Cultural rights', which have been referred to as a second generation of rights, behind civil and political rights (see Dean 2008). Food did form part of Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which was adopted in 1948:

'(1) Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services, and the right to security in the event of unemployment, sickness, disability, widowhood, old age or other lack of livelihood in circumstances beyond his control.' (UN no date)

But it was not until the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966 (OHCHR 1996) and the subsequent guidance in the UNESCO (1999) that these rights were explored in further detail and in the form of the ICESCR, ratified by states in the mid-1970s (UN 2014). Dean (2008, p2) refers to these second generation rights as 'conceptually more abstract and practically more elusive' than first generation civil and political rights. Herein, arguably, lies the premise of the challenges facing these rights and any research which tries to draw on them and the nature of the obligations placed on signatory states embodies this difficulty. Whilst the ICESCR commits signatory states to the realisation of these rights within the constraints of their available resources (UN 2014; Hosie and Lamb 2013), 'enforceable duties do not necessarily arise directly or indirectly' (Dean 2008, p.5).

The abstract and elusive nature of the right to food as an economic, social and cultural right raises questions about the effectiveness and attainability of these rights – a question which is important to address in the context of social research which is seeking progressive opportunities for ways forward. As Lister (2004, p163) argues:

'While a human rights discourse performs an important symbolic and mobilizing function and throws new light on the meaning of poverty,

the ultimate test of its effectiveness as a political tool will be the closing of that gap between promise and reality.'

Sen (2008), writing about the human right to health, sets out some of the key issues which contribute to the sense that such rights are 'remote' and provides thinking around how these can be reconciled in such a way that economic, social and cultural rights can be more effectively articulated and pursued. Sen (2008) sets out three reasons why the right to health may seem remote as a right; from which it is possible to draw parallels to the right to food. He sets out (Sen 2008, p2010): the 'legal question', 'how can health be a right since there is no binding legislation demanding just that?'; the 'feasibility question', that there is 'no way of ensuring that everyone has good health'; and the 'policy question', when the state of people's health is not under the control of policy making. Given that what people actually consume and the exact shape of their diets cannot be controlled, there are important parallels between this analysis of the right to health and the right to food. Sen offers solutions to these questions as a way of reconciling these tensions, which form the basis of the interpretation of the right to food used in this thesis.

The notion of the legal question speaks to a broader question about understanding the nature of rights. The premise of the question itself assumes that rights are 'inescapably legal', and drawing on the work of Bentham, seen as 'a child of the law' (Sen 2008). Sen argues, however, that rights can be seen differently, as social ethics and ideas of what a good society should have; this in turn enables an interpretation of rights as 'parents' of the law, guiding legislation rather than being derived from it (Sen 2008).

The question of feasibility can also be countered, according to Sen, with the acceptance of such a right seen as a 'demand to take action to promote that goal'. Therefore, rather than seeing the acceptance of a right as ensuring the right for all, this interpretation sees rights as goals and aspirations. With the question of legislating in the pursuit of a right like health, Sen argues that it is possible to see a human right as not only a parent of law, 'but also of many other ways of advancing the cause of that right'.

The work of Sen can therefore move us beyond critique and towards tangible, practicable ways of both interpreting and putting into action, economic, social and cultural rights. Furthermore, the work of Backman et al (2008) help provide nuance to the idea (and critique embedded within the seeming vagueness of) the notion of “progressive realisation” of rights. Whilst it doesn’t necessarily translate into tangible actions or ‘immediate achievement’ (Editorial 2008) against which states can be held to account it does require, as Backman et al (2008, p2048) observe that states improve their performance on human rights ‘steadily’. Moreover, the idea that this realisation occurs within the resource constraints experienced by states does, in fact, mean that more is therefore required of richer states. This means that what we should see here in the UK is a continuous, steady, on-going improvement towards the realisation of the right to food for all; and that the state can be held accountable for this.

Drawing on these earlier works by Sen (2008) and Backman et al (2008), it is possible to develop a theoretical approach to understanding the right to food for the purposes of this thesis. The nature of the right to food as a human right is seen here as a social ethic; and the realisation of this right for all established as a social good. Accepting the right to food is seen as a commitment to this social ethic; translating into a demand to take action to promote this goal. In turn, this commitment can be put into effect when understood as a parent of both laws and actions for the advancement of the right. The call for progressive realisation means that what we should see when this commitment is made and these laws and actions put in place, is a continuous, steady, on-going improvement towards the realisation of the right to food for all – for which the state can be held accountable.

## **Theoretical Framework**

The conceptualisations of food poverty and the right to food outlined above form the basis of the theoretical and analytical framework which guides the rest of the thesis. The right to food in particular, as set out in Comment 12 (UNESCR 1999), provides not only conceptual tools (such as notions of

accessibility, adequacy and acceptability) but also draws attention to particular sites for social science investigation around the nature of food acquisition and the roles of different actors in protecting and enabling the right to food on which this thesis focuses. From this and drawing on key literatures from geographical and social policy research a specific framework was developed which is illustrated in Figure 1 below. This part of the chapter discusses the framework and how it relates to the empirical findings presented in Chapters 4-7 in particular. The framework has three analytical layers which guide the thesis in two empirical parts through four individual empirical chapters.

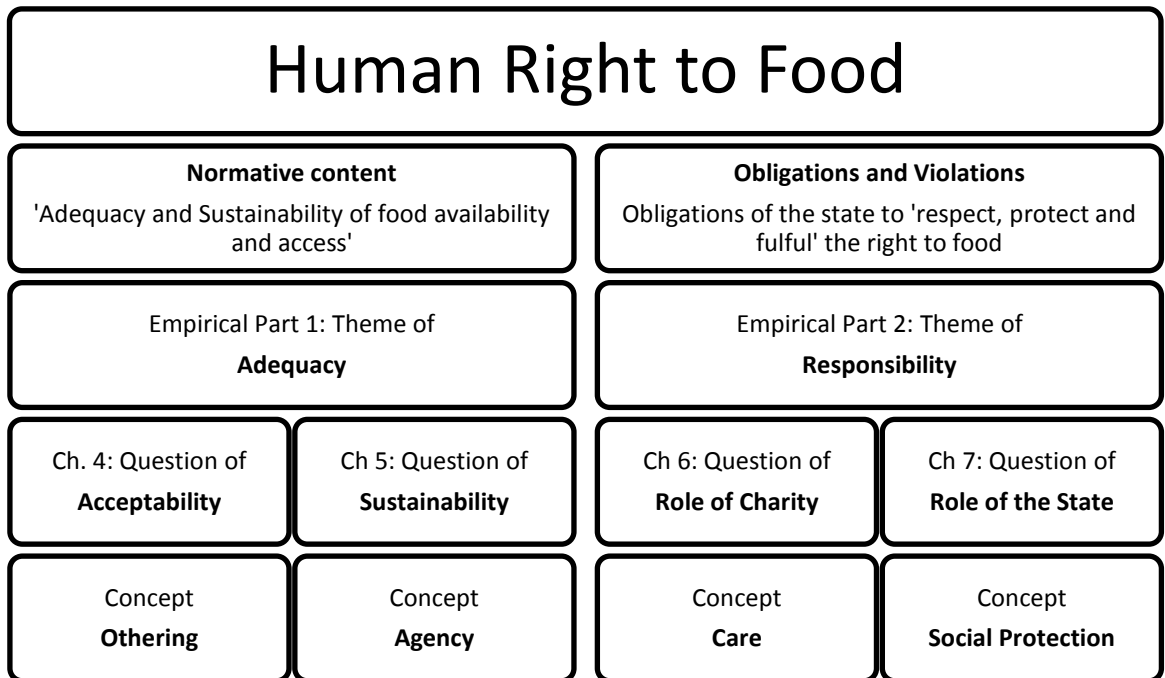


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

As articulated in the following section, two key elements, outlined in Comment 12 (UNESCO 1999), form the premise of this framework: the normative content relating to the 'adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access'; and the obligations of the state to 'respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food'. Each of the two elements drawn from the right to food give rise to two distinct empirical parts in the thesis which are framed in relation to a particular theme: the normative content surrounding

the 'adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access' is framed in relation to the theme of adequacy; and the notion of obligations is framed in relation to the theme of responsibility.

These themes are in turn explored through specific questions regarding the acceptability and sustainability of emergency food systems and the role of charity and the state in realising the right to food. These questions form the basis of four distinct empirical chapters which are answered by utilising the particular concepts and theories of othering, agency, care and social protection.

*Exploring emergency food provision in relation to normative content of the right to food*

The normative content of the right to food in relation to the adequacy and sustainability of food availability and access is explored in relation to emergency food provision in a particular way through this analytical framing. 'Adequacy' is taken as the predominant theme, as a lens through which to explore the other aspects which are also embedded (sustainability and access). For the purposes of this research, then, the overarching theme of adequacy is explored through particular questions relating to the acceptability of emergency food systems as ways of acquiring food (exploring the adequacy of the systems in relation to their social acceptability) and the sustainability of food provided through them and access to that food by those in need (exploring whether access to food through these systems is adequately sustainable).

In the first instance (Chapter 4) the normative content is explored through this initial question of acceptability. Acceptability is taken to be a particularly important concept, given the stipulation in Comment 12 (UNESCR 1999) that the meaning of adequacy relates to specific social, economic and cultural conditions. The idea of 'social acceptability' is particularly relevant and provides a specific way of interpreting what is meant by 'acceptable' food experiences in a given society. The idea of socially acceptable food



experiences relates to the nature of the types of food experiences that prevail in the UK today. This helps to guide an analysis of how acceptable the emergency food provision system is as a method of food acquisition by drawing attention to how it relates to these prevailing food acquisition methods. The idea of socially acceptable food experiences relates also to the idea of social inclusion as involving participation in these prevailing experiences – being able to shop, cook and eat “like everyone else”. Exclusion from these socially acceptable mechanisms (including as a result of experiences of food poverty) is problematic from a right to food perspective. Progressive realisation of the right to food involves full participation in society and in these socially acceptable food experiences.

In order to assess the social acceptability of emergency food systems, then, the concept of ‘other’ is utilised to explore how far these systems constitute acceptable food acquisition methods. Drawing on the work of scholars such as Cloke et al (2010), Lister (2004) and Midgley (2013), the idea of whether emergency food systems constitute an ‘other’ system of food acquisition is explored. The concept of ‘other’ is nuanced and has particular utility in the way in which it enables not just assessments of ‘otherness’ but degrees of that distinction also. Furthermore, it allows for various social, material, discursive and experiential elements to be taken into account. Importantly, the concept of ‘other’ is not inherently concerning. In food studies for example notions of ‘alternatives’ to contemporary food systems have been heralded (see Kneafsey et al 2008 and Goodman et al 2011 for examples of literature on alternative food movements). So far from being a foregone conclusion, questions of ‘other’ also open up opportunities for the exploration of whether that ‘other’ may or may not be socially acceptable. The importance of the concept of ‘other’ to the question of acceptability lies in two particular aspects: firstly it relates to a question of the acceptability of this ‘other’ system in and of itself, compared to more common food acquisition methods and secondly it relates to how far this ‘other’ constitutes exclusion from more common methods of food acquisition (as opposed to presenting a socially acceptable alternative).

The concept of 'other' is drawn on to analytically frame Chapter 4 and provides opportunities for several distinct layers of enquiry of the data collected. At a systemic level it is possible to assess how the systems work in relation to the most common, socially accepted mechanism of food acquisition (commercial food markets through shopping, Meah 2013) as well as interpret the values which are embedded within those systems or the foodstuffs themselves. Drawing on literature which both explores and problematises notions of othering in the context of poverty, food and charity research (Cloke et al 2010, Lister 2004 and Midgley 2013) the study is able to explore the discursive and experiential aspects of the 'othering' dynamics within emergency food provision. This enables an exploration of the complexities at work in these systems and how organisational motivations and impacts on recipients interact and intersect. Midgley (2013) and Cloke et al (2010) provide opportunities for exploring and problematizing the notion of 'other' and draw attention to the moral and market based qualities embedded within emergency food systems. At the same time, the work of Lister (2004) facilitates an appreciation of the importance of discourse in the process and lived experience of othering, particularly through constructs of the 'needy' or 'hungry'.

The normative content is also explored (in chapter 5) in relation to the question of the sustainability of the availability and accessibility of food through emergency food systems; whether emergency food systems are adequately sustainable modes of food acquisition. Comment 12 (UNESCR 1999) outlines that "sustainability" incorporates the notion of long-term availability and accessibility'. Whilst the right to food refers to the longevity of sustainability stretching into future generations, for the purposes of this study, emphasis is placed upon sustainability into the medium and longer term of individual or household food poverty experiences. The sustainability of food access is embedded throughout the right to food and is also located within the obligations to fulfil the right to food – to provide that access when a person's means are not adequate enough to ensure it. The question of sustainability is explored in relation to both the availability and accessibility of food in emergency food systems, by assessing the ability of these systems to

make food available on the one hand and the accessibility of that food to those that are in need of it on the other.

These issues are explored by utilising the concept of power as agency, where power is defined as the ability to exercise agency (Scott 2001, Elder-Vass 2010). Specifically this concept of agency is employed in order to understand the ability of projects to exercise agency in order to obtain sufficient amounts of food and the agency of people in need to access that food. Agency is a particularly helpful concept for exploring these issues given the ways in which it opens up opportunities for examining the impact of structures and the ways in which these may or may not be constraining actors' agency. The concept is drawn on to shape the analysis in Chapter 5 in relation to the ways in which emergency food providers are able to make food available, particularly in their operation within the context of the structure of the food retail system. It is also used to explore individuals' agency in terms of accessing that food both in relation to accessing projects and accessing enough food when inside those projects. By engaging the concept of agency with the work of Poppendieck (1998) and Tarasuk and Eakin (2005) in emergency food studies, the thesis is able to shed light on the sustainability of provision in particularly important ways. As in the work of Tarasuk and Eakin (2005) in Canada the lack of recipient rights is a key barrier to the agency of recipients in UK emergency food provision and like in the United States, several of Poppendieck's (1998) 'deadly "ins"' of food charity are identifiable in the UK notably the instability of food supply and inaccessibility for potential recipients.

### *Exploring emergency food provision in relation to obligations set out by the right to food*

The obligations that the right to food places on the state to 'respect, protect and fulfil' the human right to food is explored in the second empirical part of the thesis through the theme of responsibility. Responsibility is seen as a useful lens through which to assess the notion of states' obligations and the question of the role of all actors (individuals, communities, charities, and the

private sector) in the progressive realisation of the human right to food. The obligations placed on states – necessarily, given that they are the ones held accountable to these rights – sitting side by side to the appreciation of the roles of the full range of societal actors means that the theme of ‘responsibility’ can usefully be employed to explore the question of both who is assuming which responsibilities now and who should be assuming responsibilities and how might they do that. The theme of responsibility is explored through two particular questions around the role of charity and the role of the state in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to food.

The question of the role of charity is explored first (in Chapter 6) utilising the concept of ‘care’. The concept of care is specifically employed in relation to ‘care ethics’ in reference to ‘a critical ethic of care and responsibility’ (Lawson 2007, p.2) which sees care ‘as a form ethics’ (Popke 2006, p.506). Framed as care ethics, this concept enables the thesis to explore the phenomenon of emergency food in more depth. Lawson (2007, 3) argues that care ethics can extend research based on justice as a universal right in light of the way in which they address ‘the specific sites and social relationships that produce the need for care and that frame the specific content of care ethics’. Through foregrounding ‘the centrality and public character of care activities’, Lawson (2007, 5) argues that responsibility is reframed by care ethics as collective, challenging the ways in which neo-liberal approaches have marginalised care and privatised responsibility. This is particularly important for the thesis, enabling as it does the opportunity for more detailed exploration of how charitable emergency food provision may be assuming responsibility for care for those in food poverty as a consequence of neo-liberal shifts in state-funded provision (indeed, as an example of this marginalisation and privatisation). Lawson’s call for embodied caring practices (the giving of emergency food in this case) to be analysed as multi-sited is also particularly helpful, highlighting as it does the role of structures, institutions, organisations, communities and individuals in providing care through emergency food provision and shaping definitions and understandings of need and success.

The concept of care is employed to explore the question of the role of charity in relation to how emergency food providers are assuming responsibility for caring for people in food poverty and while they are doing so, how they conceptualise need for and the success of their provision. It goes on to explore the question of who should be taking these caring responsibilities and the role charity might have within the context of progressive realisation of the right to food. Engaging with care ethics literature enables the research to highlight the ways in which need for and success of UK emergency food provision can be understood as multi-sited. It enhances our understanding of how, whilst need and success are often framed by urgency (acute crisis need) and immediacy (meeting immediate need) they can be more effectively understood as being situated on a broader spectrum of vulnerability and financial insecurity on the one hand and as organisations which provide support at individual and community levels as part of much wider welfare networks on the other. This literature also serves to highlight the complexity embedded in notions of responsibility for helping people in food poverty and realising the right to food and how states will need to work alongside other actors and stakeholders.

The question of the role of the state is explored through the concept of social protection. Social protection is understood in a broad context, to incorporate that provided by the state and civil society. The relationship between emergency food provision and state-provided social protection is seen to be particularly important based on previous research and international experiences indicating that welfare and other state social policies can play a particularly important role in the development and entrenchment of emergency food systems (Poppendieck 1998; Riches 2002). However, this broader concept of social protection is also useful given the importance of protection offered by other social actors including charities. DeSchutter (2013, 4) makes reference to ensuring access to food through 'social protection, whether informally through community support or through State-administered mechanisms'. The concept of social protection also allows for considering specifically the role of faith-based providers within this category which is particularly important given the Christian nature of the Trussell Trust

and many FareShare Community Food Members (CFMs). Previous research has suggested that some from churches involved in food bank provision feel that food banking in the context of a reduced welfare state may present churches with a renewed role in social protection (Lambie-Mumford 2013A).

The concept of social protection and its relationship to the role of the state is explored in particular in Chapter 7 in relation to the impact that the currently changing welfare state is having on the need for and shape of food banking in the UK today. It is also drawn on in this chapter to explore the wider question of social protection more broadly and the role for a range of actions within it. Bringing social policy literature relating to the (changing) UK welfare state to bear on this part of the study is a particularly important contribution of this chapter. In addition to setting the rise of emergency food provision in this important social and policy context, it also serves to problematise prevailing understandings of this welfare retrenchment and its social consequences as inevitable (for example drawing on Farnsworth 2011 and Hay 2005). Furthermore this literature helps to raise bigger questions about the relationship between the welfare state and emergency food provision in the UK into the future and facilitates the exploration of several possible future alternatives.

### **Conclusion: food poverty and the right to food**

The relationship between food poverty and the right to food, for the purposes of this thesis are therefore that food poverty is seen as a way of understanding the 'problem' and lived experienced which underpins need for emergency food provision. The right to food, however, is more than the resolution of that problem. Whilst overcoming food poverty is a pre-requisite for the realisation of the right to food, it is more than this, recognising the right to food as a social ethic.

By understanding the concept and particular definition of food poverty outlined here in the context of a right to food framework, the thesis provides an opportunity to understand the problem (of food poverty) in the context of

progressive policies which stretch further and more widely than resolving this inequitable experience and focus on a range of policy areas and incorporates all sectors of society. The right to food framework opens up questions of solutions, situating this structurally focussed definition of food poverty in a wider, freer space.

The right to food framework is therefore both a way of interpreting the food poverty 'problem' (in terms of what the nature of it means for what policy and action is needed) and a way of seeing the solution as something much more: as a social ethic; representing a commitment to the right to food for all as a social good; and establishing responsibility and a framework (as parent of law and action and in the form of 'progressive realisation') for the continual improvements of societies towards the realisation of the right for all.

This chapter has also presented the theoretical framework which shapes the rest of the thesis. The framework highlights particular aspects of the right to food and utilises theories of responsibility, adequacy and particular concepts of othering, agency, care and social protection to explore the nature of emergency food provision as a system of food acquisition and critically engage with its role in the progressive realisation of the human right to food. In doing so, the framework facilitates a study of the rise of emergency food provision and its implications for the right to food in a way which engages with and in turn contributes to, several key areas of geographical and social policy literature including power, othering, care ethics and welfare state research.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology

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The research on which this thesis is based was a challenging but highly rewarding undertaking. This chapter sets out the research design, introduces the case study organisations and reflects on the process of and challenges faced during the project. This is one of several pieces of work I have completed on issues of food poverty and emergency food provision and in the first instance the chapter locates the project in the context of this wider body of work. It goes on to clarify some technical issues around the terminology which is employed for the purposes of this research before outlining the main aim and research questions which are explored.

The chapter details the research design and provides a rationale for the selection of the particular case study organisations. These organisations are then introduced in detail and the process of data collection is outlined. The individual local projects visited and interviews undertaken are then set out followed by a discussion of issues of researcher positionality. Issues of ethics and processes of informed consent are then outlined and details given of the analytical processes. The limitations of the data are explored and the chapter ends with reflections on the experience of the research as a whole.

#### **Talking about and researching emergency food provision**

As outlined in the Preface and Introduction (Chapter 1) this thesis fits amongst a wider set of research that I have been involved in relating to emergency food provision. The 2011 project funded by Coventry University (Lambie 2011) was particularly important for the development of this doctoral work and provided key methodological insight and early findings on the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network in particular which inform the design of this research.



The terminology used in the UK to describe projects involved in charitable food distribution is still evolving (Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2014). This thesis draws on broader 'emergency food' terminology to describe projects which help people to access food they would otherwise be unable to obtain (Poppendieck 1998) and focuses in particular on charitable initiatives as opposed to state supported food assistance (such as food vouchers). The UK government recently began to use the term 'food aid' to describe these kinds of initiatives and in commissioning our research review in 2013 defined food aid in the following way:

“Food aid’ is here used as an umbrella term encompassing a range of large-scale and small local activities aiming to help people meet food needs, often on a short-term basis during crisis or immediate difficulty; more broadly they contribute to relieving symptoms of household or individual level food insecurity and poverty.’ (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, iv)

The research review outlined an initial typology of projects and initiatives that would fit within this definition and which are both charitable philanthropic endeavours (such as hot meal projects or food parcel projects) and state welfare provided (such as food vouchers) (see Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). Non-governmental organisations have also begun to adopt this 'food aid' terminology but in the current public discourse dominated by discussion of food banks in particular the term is sometimes not distinguished from this (food bank) specific type of provision (for example see the recent publication from Oxfam UK and Church Action on Poverty; Cooper and Dumpleton 2013).

Two particularly important emergency food charity terms for this thesis are the labels 'food bank' and 'surplus food redistribution'. 'Food bank' has come to mean in the UK context a project which provides emergency parcels of food for people to take away, prepare and eat (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014; Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2014). This is distinct from the way 'food banks' are identified in other country contexts for example the United States where they are often referred to as large stores or warehouses from which local projects (sometimes called 'food pantries') draw down food to give to people in need (see Poppendieck 1998). Food banks in the UK are therefore

front-line charitable providers of food. Surplus food redistribution involves food that will not reach a retail outlet (for reasons such as being close to 'used by' date, change of packaging, over production) being intercepted whilst it is within the food system and distributed to projects that help people in need (see Midgley 2013; Alexander and Smaje 2008). Importantly for this thesis, food banks are front-line providers whereas food redistribution projects work as 'middlemen' between the source of surplus (food system) and the projects which provide people with food.

## **Research Questions**

The aim of this research is to explore the nature of emergency food provision in the UK and critically engage with the implications of this phenomenon for the realisation of the right to food. By drawing on the theoretical and conceptual developments outlined in Chapter 2, a series of particular research questions and sub-questions are explored in order to meet this aim:

1. Is emergency food provision adequately socially acceptable and sustainable?
  - a. How socially acceptable is it to acquire food from emergency food providers, compared to mainstream methods of food acquisition?
  - b. How sustainable is food availability through emergency food provision into the future and how accessible is this food to people in need?
  
2. What are the roles of different actors in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human right to food?
  - a. What role is emergency food provision having and what responsibilities should it hold in the realisation of the right to food?
  - b. What role does the state have in realising the right to food and what impact is it having on the growth of emergency food provision?

3. What, if any, opportunities can be identified for constructive next steps towards the realisation of the right to food in the UK?
  - a. How can the right to food guide policies and actions which might lead to progressive outcomes?
  - b. What recommendations can be made, to a range of stakeholders, to inform tangible next steps?

### **Research Design**

In seeking answers to these questions, the research design involved the collection of qualitative interview and some observation data through a case study approach. The qualitative data were collected between August 2012 and October 2013 in the form of semi-structured interviews. Fifty one interviews were undertaken in total, with national staff of FareShare and the Trussell Trust and with managers of emergency food projects at FareShare depots in case study locations of Sheffield and Bristol as well as the Cotswolds and Bradford.

A qualitative approach was chosen for the purposes of research design given the under-researched nature of emergency food provision in the United Kingdom. Qualitative methods, in so far as they enable a complex and detailed understanding of an issue, were therefore seen to be particularly appropriate (Creswell 2007, p40). This thesis views case study research as a methodology as well as a product of inquiry and the research design involved the study of the issue of emergency food provision through two cases in this bounded (emergency food) system (see Creswell 2007, p73). Specifically the research design incorporates a collective case study approach, with one focus of inquiry pursued through multiple case studies (in this case the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare) (Creswell 2007, p74).

Several other potential methods were also considered and dismissed. A qualitative approach was chosen over a quantitative or mixed-method methodology given the under-research nature of the phenomenon and the need to get detailed and possibly unstructured data in order to gain a better

understanding of the nature of emergency food provision. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the key method of data collection given their utility in exploring a range of issues in-depth in a systematic but flexible manner. This was seen as preferable to participant observation in light of the need to obtain detailed information on specific aspects of organisational working and motivation which may not have been accessible through less direct methods. Whilst some observational data were collected (in the form of photographs of projects and notes of visits) this was to support the primary data source of semi-structured interviews.

A national case study approach was adopted rather than selecting individual local initiatives in order to gain a better understanding of how these initiatives work as part of wider 'systems'. Finally, emphasis was placed upon exploring emergency food provision as a system rather than to focus on recipients, given the emphasis in the research questions on how these initiatives work. A very small number of recipients were interviewed, however, in order to gain 'theoretical saturation' given that previous work with clients provides a good evidence base for the purposes of this research.

### **The case study organisations**

The two case study organisations for the research are the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare. These organisations form the biggest national networks of food banking initiatives and surplus food redistribution respectively in the United Kingdom. This part of the methodology chapter will introduce these organisations, outline the reasons why they were chosen for the purposes of this research and discuss some of the challenges faced in drawing comparisons between them.

The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare were selected as case studies for the research in light of the fact that they are the only national scale emergency food organisations. That is, organisations which focus specifically on emergency food provision. There are several national scale charities who have over many years been involved in providing emergency

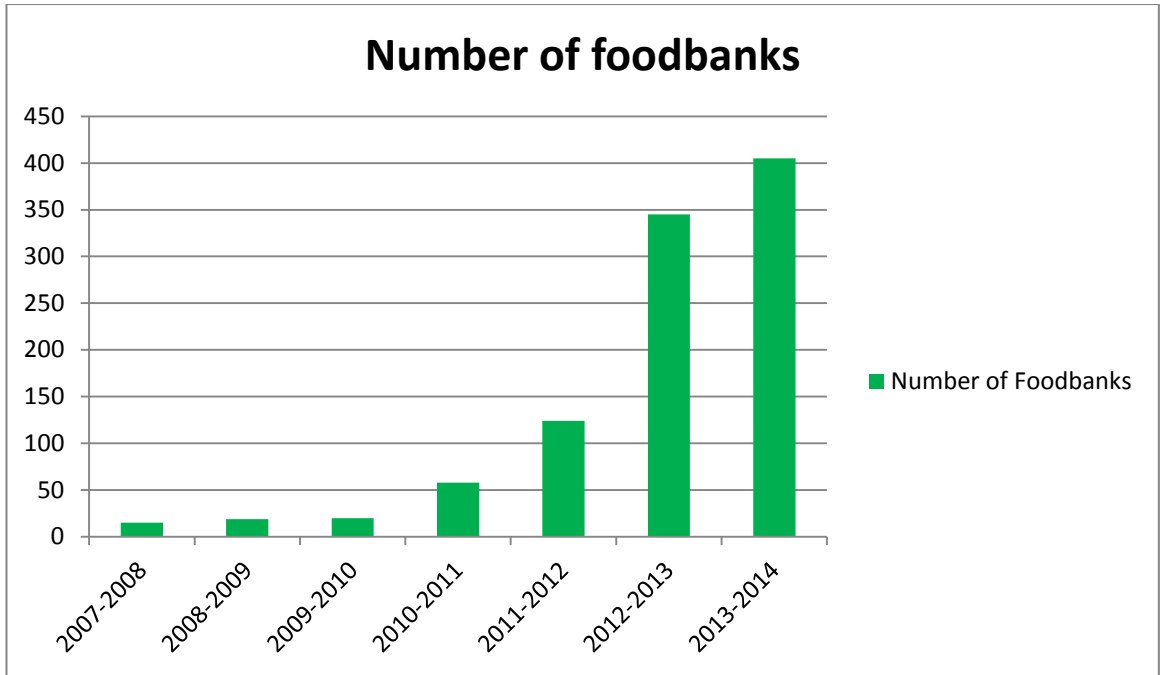
food in some form but always as part of a wider package of work, for example the Salvation Army or the British Red Cross. They have also been chosen because of their age and the fact that they represent the recent emergence of emergency food provision. Each becoming franchised in the early 2000s their growth has occurred over the last 14 years and the last few particularly.

*The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network*

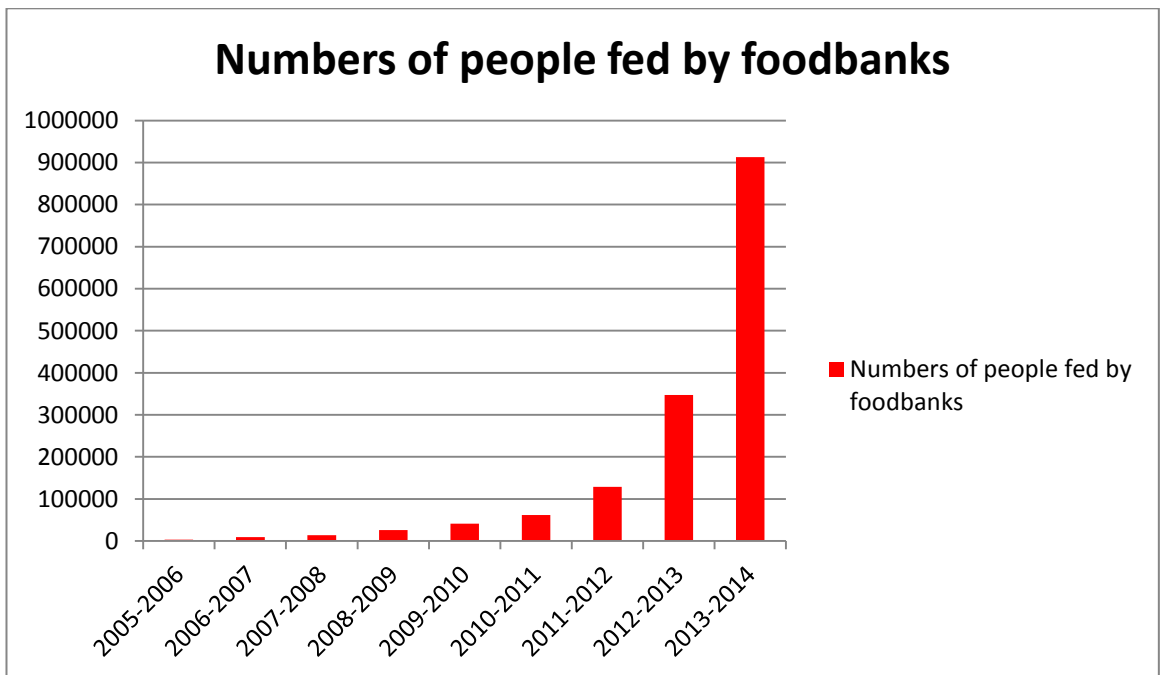
The first Trussell Trust foodbank was set up in Salisbury, where the Trust is based, in 1999 and the first not-for-profit foodbank was established in 2004 in Gloucester. As of April 2014 the network had over 400 foodbanks across the UK, including in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. The table and graphs below, drawn from data provided by the Trust (some of which is available online see Trussell Trust no dateA) outline how the Network has grown since data was collected in 2005.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Number of foodbanks</b>	<b>Number of people fed</b>
2005-2006	2	2814
2006-2007	2	9174
2007-2008	15	13849
2008-2009	19	25899
2009-2010	20	40898
2010-2011	58	61468
2011-2012	124	128697
2012-2013	345	346992
2013-2014	405	913138

Table 1: Foodbank Network growth



Graph 1: foodbank project growth



Graph 2: foodbank recipient growth

What we can see from these data is a prolonged period of progressive but relatively small scale growth in terms of both provision and uptake of foodbanks between 2005 and 2012. In the last two years there has been a

particularly sharp increase in both the number of foodbank projects in existence and the number of people turning to them for help. As was discussed in Chapter 2 (theoretical chapter) these statistics are problematic. For example, the 'numbers of people fed' statistics relate to the number of parcels handed out and cannot account for how many different individuals these represent (i.e. they do not take account of repeat visits).

The foodbank model is operated as a not-for-profit franchise (see Lambie 2011). The network is managed on a 'bottom-up' basis, with the Trust responding to queries from local communities who then purchase a franchise (through a one-off upfront payment and subsequent annual payments). The projects are run and managed locally but follow the model's principles and processes and gain support from regional and national Trussell Trust workers. Foodbanks are able to use official branding and publications and, most recently, benefit from national corporate partnerships – able to participate in national food collections with major retailers such as Tesco, Sainsbury's and Asda.

In operation the foodbank model is geographically bounded. The basis of the model is that food is collected from local people, sorted and stored locally and given out to local people in need. Food is collected at local supermarkets, schools, churches and businesses and the Trust reports that 90% of the food distributed by the network is from private donations – as opposed to corporate donations from the food industry (Trussell Trust 2014). Food banks give out food parcels at what are termed 'distribution centres', these are places around the community that the food bank serves which open for regular sessions when people can come to collect food. The length of time and regularity of these sessions is at the discretion of the individual food banks so access is not prescribed by the Network and can vary. The emergency food parcels provided at all Trussell Trust foodbanks are designed to last for 3 days (10 meals – 1 meal for the day it is collected and three meals a day for the three days that follow) and each contain a

prescribed combination of food stuffs per person (the parcel size is scaled up according to how many people there are in the household).<sup>2</sup>

To receive a food parcel a person is required to obtain a referral (in the form of a foodbank voucher). Each foodbank makes connections to 'front line care professionals' in their local communities who, once they have been briefed by the foodbank on how the referral system works, holds vouchers to give to the people they work with who are in need. The Trust reports that foodbanks in the Network work with 27,000 such professionals who hold vouchers in local communities (Trussell Trust 2014). The number of referrers and the exact agencies that hold vouchers is determined by each foodbank but can include: advice centres; doctors; health visitors; family centres and others.

Distribution centres are usually set out in a 'café style' with tables and chairs and hot drinks and biscuits are usually served. This is designed to set the tone of the experience and to avoid any formal systems of queuing. Once at the foodbank recipients are met by volunteers who, along with giving them a food parcel also spend time some with them. Signposting is an important part of the design of foodbanks, where volunteers talk through with people their experiences and issues and signpost them on to relevant agencies in the local community where appropriate (for example benefits rights workers, mental health support, children's centres).

The local foodbank franchises are supported by regional and national layers of Foodbank Network staff. Regional development managers and officers now work across the country to support projects and prospective projects in their areas and to undertake annual audits of the franchises. At a national level the Trust employs several network officers (for development and management) as well as a Network Director. There is a national PR and marketing team and a range of other staff based at the Trust (within which the Network sits) who manage fundraising and corporate partnerships.

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<sup>2</sup> All Food parcels contain the following items: cereal; soup (canned or packet); beans/spaghetti in sauce; tinned tomatoes/pasta sauce; tinned vegetables; tinned meat (or vegetarian options); tinned fish; tinned fruit; rice pudding; biscuits; sugar; pasta/rice/noodles; tea or coffee; juice; UHT/powdered milk; and extra treats such as sauces or chocolate – depending on what the Foodbank has available.



## *FareShare*

FareShare is a surplus food redistribution charity with a dual motivation of avoiding food waste and overcoming hunger. In 1994 the homeless charity Crisis founded Crisis FareShare with one depot in London. In 2004 FareShare became an independent charity with five depots (in London, Yorkshire, Brighton, Edinburgh and Dundee). FareShare now has nineteen depots across the country that distribute food to 1,200 charities. In 2013 FareShare reported that the food they redistributed contributed to 51,000 meals a day (FareShare 2014).

FareShare redistributes surplus food from within the food system to charitable projects that provide food to people in need. The surplus is intercepted before it reaches a retail outlet and sent to projects who work in some way with 'vulnerable' people and provide food (in whatever form) to the people they help. The food redistributed by FareShare therefore reaches a huge range of projects including soup kitchens, meal projects, wet and dry houses, homeless hostels, lunch clubs and community cafes. The principle behind becoming a 'Community Food Member' (CFM) of FareShare is that the project could redistribute the funds it would be spending on food to increase support or provision in other ways (for example by employing a worker or providing an additional kind of service).

FareShare relies on partnerships with the main UK food retailers (such as Tesco, Sainsburys and Asda) to 'open up' this surplus within their supply chains. Food is then accessed from various points in these chains. Depots all comply with food safety regulations and training for this is provided by national FareShare staff. Depots manage relationships with CFMs locally. Food is either collected from warehouses by the depot staff or sometimes it is delivered to the depot, depending on the arrangements made. It is sorted and stored and then sent out in FareShare vans to CFMs on a weekly (or sometimes twice weekly) basis. There is currently work underway at FareShare to reimagine the role of depots which until now have always operated in this fashion. With increased demand from community projects it

is envisaged that depots will operate on a more regional basis, potentially running what are called 'hub and spoke' operations – where the regional depot sends food out to spokes across the region from which projects collect or more localised distribution occurs.

The two case study organisations do, however, pose some challenges when examined alongside one another. In the first instance, FareShare's focus on re-distribution means that they effectively work as a 'middle man' in the provision, with no direct involvement in provisioning. A key part of the Foodbank model on the other hand is the provision of food to people directly. Secondly, FareShare represents only one part of the emergency food process (food re-distribution) whereas Foodbanks embody the whole process (from donation to provision). Thirdly, over the time of the research the organisations were increasingly working together and adapting individually so the points of distinction between them and their relationship with each other were constantly evolving throughout the duration of the work.

### **Data collection**

Collecting data from these two case study organisations involved semi-structured interviews with either providers of emergency food (project managers or equivalent) or strategic members of staff at head offices. Twenty six of the interviews related to FareShare and twenty two to the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network (three were with people from independent organisations). Interviews were conducted at sixteen emergency food projects (these included foodbanks and projects who received surplus food from FareShare) and two FareShare depots. Eighteen strategic interviews were undertaken with senior staff at the head offices of both organisations. Given the organisational focus of the study and existing international evidence base relating to recipient experiences, only a handful of emergency food recipients were interviewed for the research (four in total).

Individual local-level emergency food projects were visited as examples of the work of case study organisations and involved trips to Foodbanks and FareShare Community Food Members (i.e. organisations that receive surplus redistributed by FareShare). An initial scoping of Trussell Trust foodbanks involved visits to North Cotswold Foodbank – for an example of a rural project – and Bradford Foodbank – for an example of a particularly exemplary project from the Trussell Trust’s perspective.

Given the scale of both organisations (in terms of numbers of foodbanks and CFMs) and the desire to get a sense of how these organisations worked on the ground as part of local welfare structures, it was decided that projects would be selected to visit from a small number of case study areas in order to gain some more detailed perspective of local systems. Two cities were chosen – Sheffield and Bristol – on the basis that in both areas there were identifiable groups of emergency food projects which were working together in some way to form local emergency food systems. These particular cities were chosen because on the one hand they had identifiable networks and on the other these networks were contrasting in nature, with Bristol being more formalised and Sheffield more organic and relational. In Bristol, this took the form of the ‘5 K Partnership’ and in Sheffield this took the form of the less formal ‘Sheffield Food Bank Network’ which sees food banks and other projects in the area get together approximately every other month to discuss issues and share experience. In both cities the FareShare depot which serves the area was visited along with a handful of CFMs. A similar number of Trussell Trust foodbanks were also visited in the cities and in both cases an independent project – with no affiliation to either Foodbank or FareShare, but which played an active role in the local network – was also visited. The table below outlines which projects took part in the research.

	<b>Trussell Trust Foodbanks</b>	<b>FareShare Community Food Members</b>
<b>Sheffield</b>	Burngreave Foodbank Gleadless Valley Foodbank S6 Foodbank	Archer Project Emmaus Sheffield Jubilee Food Bank Parsons Cross Initiative (not a CFM)
<b>Bristol</b>	East Bristol Foodbank North West Bristol Foodbank North Bristol Foodbank	Bristol Refugee Rights Wild Goose Café Cheltenham Open Door Matthew Tree Project (not a CFM)
<b>Elsewhere</b>	Bradford Foodbank North Cotswolds Foodbank	

Table 2: emergency food projects visited

The selection of foodbanks in each city was done to obtain as much (if not all) of the foodbank provision in the city as possible at the time of the data collection. Community Food Members incorporate a wide range of initiatives, from community cafes to hostels to lunch clubs. The selection of projects to visit for this research was focussed, given the aims and research questions, on projects which provided *emergency food* specifically – so projects which provided food for people who would otherwise not be able to obtain enough to feed themselves or their families. Across the two cities emergency food CFMs were selected in such a way to capture a range of emergency initiatives and in doing so included an independent (non- Trussell Trust) food bank, a homeless drop-in centre, a housing project, a refugee centre and a meal programme.

In addition to the project managers (or equivalent) of the projects listed in Table 2, interviews were also undertaken with, as mentioned above, staff and volunteers from Depots serving both cities (Yorkshire and the South West) and in Bristol with the leader of the 5 K Partnership and the Sustainability Manager at the City Council in order to get a more detailed perspective on how emergency providers were working together in the city and with the council. At an organisational level, interviews were undertaken

with key central staff at both the Trussell Trust and FareShare (a full list of interviewees can be found in Appendix 2). For the Trussell Trust an additional layer of management was incorporated into the interviews and Regional Development Officers (RDOs) were also spoken with in order to gain insight from those who worked with individual foodbanks on a regular basis.

In terms of navigating positionality within this research project (Rose 1997), several elements are particularly important. In the first instance, I brought with me to the project experience of research in areas of deprivation, food poverty and poverty. Within the context of interviews themselves and building relationships with potential interviewees (in the form of project managers), the fact I used the national organisations as gatekeepers may have influenced how I was seen - as being sent by the organisations rather than independent to them. It is also important to acknowledge the situated knowledge of participants. As highlighted previously, the vast majority of interviewees were managers of emergency food projects or staff at the national organisations. This means that the knowledge gathered is, in the most part, from the particular perspective of those organising and providing emergency food.

### **Ethics and consent**

The research was given ethical approval by the University of Sheffield ethics committee. Processes of informed consent were adhered to and any personal data kept confidential. Potential interview participants were approached through a 'gatekeeper' (in the form of contacts at both national case study organisations). These gatekeepers put me in touch with potential projects to visit and organisational staff to interview. Individual interview times and arrangements were made directly with the interviewee when they had indicated interest in taking part in the research.

The process of informed consent involved providing potential participants with a copy of the information sheet at the point an invitation to interview was

issued, to help them decide if they wanted to take part. At the start of any formal participation in the research (i.e. interview) participants were talked through the information sheet and invited to ask any questions they may have before signing the consent form (or giving oral consent on tape recorder if they were not able to write). An important part of the consent process involved gaining consent for attributing direct quotes in the thesis. This was not only an explicit section on the consent form, but an issue that I highlighted to each participant. To protect personal data codes were used for transcripts and any personal details were stored on a secure, password protected computer or in a secure cabinet.

The main ethical considerations involved the handful of interviews which were conducted with recipients of emergency food. In order to mitigate against distress several processes were employed for these interviews. In the first instance the use of a gatekeeper (namely project volunteers or staff) had the benefit of being able to learn from project workers' knowledge and experience of their recipients and their judgement of whether participation would be distressing or not. This procedure also meant that potential participants were not refusing a researcher directly and provided a point of contact to refer people back to if they did get distressed during an interview. Thankfully, none of the participants got distressed in the interviews, but if they had procedures were in place to halt the interview and make sure they were comfortable to proceed. Ethical considerations relating to other interviews included a concern over sensitivity in particular around the nature of corporate partnerships and some of this information was given 'off the record' or anonymised.

### **Data analysis**

All interviews (bar one) were audio recorded, following processes of informed consent, and transcribed verbatim. In addition to interview transcripts, pictures were taken of each project or FareShare depot visited (formal consent was sought for this) and observation notes were kept of each visit. These were all placed into Nvivo to aid analysis.

Coding the data involved an iterative process of negotiation between inductive coding from the raw data and thematic coding done as the theoretical framework was developed. I began with an initial round of inductive coding. These codes were then related to the evolving theoretical approach to food poverty and the right to food. An iterative process followed which involved identifying where these initial codes pointed to specific aspects of the right to food theory or to key geographical or social policy theories, enabling the development of a comprehensive theoretical and conceptual approach to frame the final analysis.

### **Limitations of the data**

The key caveats which must be applied to these data are, in the first instance, that the vast majority of these data come from the perspective of those involved in providing emergency food rather than recipients. This was appropriate for the purposes of the wider study given the focus on the nature of the organisations and evolving food systems, but it is important to acknowledge the perspectives from which the findings have arisen. An additional caveat is the time at which the interviews were undertaken. In the fast-moving context of both welfare reform and food assistance growth the fact that the interviews were undertaken on or before September 2013 means that the research is not able to assess the impact of welfare changes or organisational growth and change which have been implemented and or begun to be felt more recently. Furthermore, given this timescale some of the data were collected before welfare changes were implemented in April 2013 and some in the six months after. Where this has a bearing on the findings it is outlined and accounted for.

### **Experience of the research**

This research project was not without its difficulties. The experience of being a researcher in this dynamic and politically charged field whilst rewarding, was also quite challenging. Logistically, as the research progressed and the

topic of emergency food provision became increasingly popular amongst researchers and research students, local projects were increasingly fatigued by requests from researchers to take part in projects. Whilst my own contact had been made through the national charities – unlike many others – and in most cases fairly early on so that access was granted, on some occasions when I arrived to speak with projects they were audibly fatigued with requests and involvement.

Another key challenge of the research was the changing nature of the phenomenon under study, as it was being studied. As highlighted earlier and in the Introduction chapter, whilst the growth of emergency food provision has occurred across the last decade, the most recent few years (2011-2014), when this research was undertaken, were particularly significant. The case study organisations – FareShare and the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network – saw their provision increase significantly during this time. The Foodbank Network for example grew from 158 to 400 foodbanks and the numbers their projects fed went from over 61,000 (in 2010-11) to over 900,000 (in 2013-14). This was hard to capture as it was happening and given the timescale of data collection (August 2012-October 2013) the interviews were not able to capture reflections on the last year's statistics which were published in April 2014.

An additional challenge that was felt particularly acutely in the context of the Defra research (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014) and other writing and speaking over the time of this research was the highly political nature of the issue of food poverty and emergency food provision. Whilst this has not necessarily impacted upon the content of the thesis, the three years in which the research was undertaken saw the issues move from relatively hidden to high profile and highly charged political issues.

### **Researching emergency food provision and the right to food in the UK**

In exploring the rise of emergency food provision in the UK and the implications it has for the realisation of the right to food this project involves a



case study-based exploration of emergency food systems. Collecting data from those running projects and employed centrally the research looks at the experiences of the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network and FareShare. The research comprises one of the first and most systematic studies of these organisations to date – the two most prominent national scale emergency food charities.

This project is one of several I have undertaken on issues of emergency food provision and food poverty and fits within the context of other projects funded by Coventry University, Defra and Communities and Culture Network+ in particular. Researching this issue over these particular few years (2011-2014) has been a challenge given the dynamic nature of the phenomenon under study and the politically charged nature of the issues of food charity and food poverty.

The process of the research saw a considerable amount of raw data collected which was analysed and is presented here guided by the theoretical framework set out in Chapter 2. Overall the knowledge base that was built up as part of this project provides unique and valuable insight into the emerging and relatively new phenomenon of emergency food provision in the UK.

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## **Empirical Part 1**

### **Acceptability and Sustainability of Emergency Food**

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## Chapter 4

### Emergency food provision: an ‘other’ food system?

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This chapter explores the notion of whether receiving food from emergency food providers is an *acceptable* process of obtaining food, by right to food standards. It does so by exploring the nature of this provision in the cases under study and exploring key elements of how food is sourced by and acquired from them. In particular the chapter explores whether emergency food provision as it is emerging in the United Kingdom forms a recognisably ‘other’ system of obtaining food and considers critically what this might mean for the realisation of the human right to food in the UK.

The analysis presented below is framed by two particular sets of arguments. In the first instance, evidence from this research is combined with previous findings from Tarasuk and Eakin (2005) to discuss how far emergency food provision forms an identifiably ‘other’ system of food acquisition. Key characteristics of these charities (including the lack of recipient rights, recipient neediness, and food operating outside the market) compared to more currently recognisable forms of obtaining food indicate that they do form ‘other systems’.

However, theoretical and empirical evidence from Cloke et al (2010) and Midgley (2013) also provide an analytical framework for exploring other data collected, which indicates that this may not be a simple distinction to draw. Cloke et al’s (2010, p101) work on organisational ethics – ‘the performance of organisational ethos’ – provides a framework for identifying the moral imperatives on which these systems are based including ‘feeding the hungry’ and ‘preventing food waste’. Beyond these identifiable social qualities, Midgley’s (2013) work also helps to identify how the foods provided in these systems could still be said to contain recognisable market qualities – in the case of these organisations through discourses of surplus and the donation of privately purchased foods. However as further data shows us, whilst identifiable moral and market-based qualities do reside within these systems,

this does not necessarily compensate for the ways in which they are experienced as 'other' by those who have to turn to them and who are then themselves 'othered' through their participation in them.

The chapter argues that ultimately these organisations do make up an identifiably and experientially 'other' system of obtaining food. It is recognisably distinct from the more common and socially acceptable mechanisms that most people use and moreover, this system is experienced as 'other' by those who have to use it – representing a particularly difficult social experience and one which discursively also others them. This 'otherness' is argued to be highly problematic from the perspective of 'acceptability' in a right to food context which prioritises relatively defined social acceptability and social justice in food experiences. The findings suggest that emergency food provision is not an acceptable means of food acquisition by these right to food standards in light of the lived experiences of social unacceptability (embodied in feelings of shame and embarrassment) and exclusion (from socially accepted modes of acquiring food) by recipients' within these systems.

In order to begin an exploration of whether emergency food provision represents an acceptable way of obtaining food, we must first of all explore how food is obtained by people in the UK today. As (Meah 2013, p197) observes, in western societies shopping for food is the most common way that people obtain food: 'foodstuffs are distributed through a commercial system and acquired through shopping'. This fact forms the critical premise of the chapter. Participating in the commercial process of shopping defines food experiences in the UK today and this market based experience (where people exercise choice and consumer power) is the socially recognised way in which people acquire food for themselves and their families.

Understanding this is critical for assessing the social acceptability of emergency food systems. Part of the question of social acceptability and inherent within the definitions of both food poverty and the right to food adopted in this thesis is the issue of social justice; and being unable to access socially recognised ways of obtaining food because of a lack of money is an important experience of exclusion and social injustice.

## Identifying an 'other' system

So how does the emergency food provision undertaken by the organisations under study compare to this mainstream model of food acquisition? Tarasuk and Eakin (2005, p184) in their paper, refer to surplus food redistribution through food banks in Canada as representing a 'secondary food system [which] functions outside the "rules" of the competitive food retail system'. Whilst their analysis was around how key features of food banking systems enable the distribution of food which is surplus, the notion that such charitable systems are outside of retail systems and thereby outside the rules which constitute them is an important way to understand the case study organisations for this research.

The ways in which both organisations operate outside the market and outside of a commercial system in which food is acquired through shopping, is a key defining feature of how emergency food provision works. The food is both sourced for and acquired from these projects through mechanisms other than market exchange. Food is sourced either through donations of surplus or private donations of previously purchased goods and acquired free, following a process of being identified as needy either by attending a project or being referred there.

The ways in which this distinction manifests in terms of the experience of people in emergency food systems compared to consumers' food retail markets is worth discussing here. According to Tarasuk and Eakin (2005, p184) the experience of food bank clients:

'stands in stark contrast to the mainstream food system, where affluent consumers can choose from among literally thousands of different (or seemingly different) food products, marketers bombard them with claims about the virtues of particular product ingredients, and values such as visual perfection, freshness, and convenience reign supreme.'

Instead of active consumers, people accessing emergency food providers are recipients of food who qualify for that provision in light of their neediness. Similarly, compared to consumers for whom retailers make shopping as

convenient as possible, recipients of emergency food have to, on occasion, go to significant lengths to obtain this food including referral procedures and physically accessing projects in specific places and at specific times. The lack of rights of recipients both to access and when within these systems and the reliance on volunteer labour forces further distances the emergency food system from that of commercial markets and social security provision.

By operating outside of the market, this provision could be said to form an 'other' food system, one which is distinct from the mainstream ways in which people source food in the UK today. Tarasuk and Eakin (2005, p.177, 178) referred to the redistribution of surplus through food banks as forming a 'second tier', 'ad hoc secondary food system'. Whilst foodbanks do not in the main redistribute surplus and therefore would not necessarily qualify in this conceptualisation, the situation of both organisations' modes of obtaining food (from CFMs of FareShare and Foodbank) outside of market exchange, food commerce and shopping, means that these emergency food organisations do all the same constitute an 'other' system of food acquisition outside of the socially accepted mainstream. So, whilst surplus redistribution may both 'other' in the form of a secondary tier food system (Tarasuk and Eakin 2005; Poppendeick 1998, p168 refers to it as a 'secondary market') food banks, if not conceptualised in this way given that they do not redistribute food, may be a parallel 'other'.

However, whilst it is possible to identify and characterise this system as inherently 'other' to the mainstream ways in which people obtain food in the UK, other writing and empirical research suggests that more nuance may lie behind this categorisation. The work of Cloke et al (2010) and Midgley (2013) indicates that these systems are not completely removed from the commercial food system in light of the market based qualities that still reside with the food itself and that the moral imperatives that drive the organisations mean that these systems embody social motivations of value.

### **Moral Imperatives in Emergency food Systems**

In studying the nature of emergency food organisations and the local projects which provide food the moral imperative(s) that drive them become immediately apparent. These imperatives drive and shape the nature of the work that is done and in exploring these dynamics it is possible to draw insight from the work of Cloke et al (2010) on organisational ethos and ethics in relation to homeless charities.

Cloke et al's (2010, p101) analytical framework of organisational ethics – defined as 'the performance of organisational ethos' – in the first instance provides a way of identifying this moral imperative (as part of the ethos of the case study organisations) and in the second, a means of seeing the ways in which these organisations work as a performance of this ethos. As we will see, from the perspective of the providers and those involved in the case study organisations these moral motivations and performances give the systems inherent value.

For both organisations the aim to feed 'hungry' people is a central motivation to their organisational missions. The term 'hunger' is employed in the aims of both organisations to convey their motivation to meet need. The overall mission of the Trussell Trust is described as being to 'create a nation where nobody needs to go hungry' (Foodbank Network Director). Whilst the Trussell Trust mission is a singular focus on feeding hungry people (sometimes discussed as supporting people in crisis (Trussell Trust no dateC)), for FareShare the moral underpinning of their system is twofold, 'fighting hunger, tackling food waste' (FareShare no date).

Having said this, whilst the focus of foodbank is on hunger, the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network is also a faith-based organisation and the motivation of the work of foodbank is derived from the Christian basis on which it was established. Sharing Jesus' love (although not, it must be said, through proselytising but the gesture of care) is as important an aspect to the work of foodbanks as the giving of emergency food. The premise on which these projects work is described as:

'Foodbanks shows Jesus' love in action by giving food to people in crisis in the local area, providing short term emergency relief.' (Cited in Lambie 2011, p13)

And faith is embedded in the principles of the network:

'to love and cherish and reach out to our hungry neighbour, people who are in need'

Trussell Trust Foodbank Network Manager

Specific biblical passages, focused on helping the 'hungry' or others experiencing various aspects of poverty or suffering ultimately drive the work of individual projects, particularly Matthew Ch25 V35-40 which describes 'I was hungry and you fed me' (The Bible Societies 1994, p.38).

Importantly, however these motivations can also be seen as moral imperatives and for both organisations hunger and in the case of FareShare food waste, is seen as unjust. As the Scotland Regional Development Officer described:

'[why foodbanks are established] I think it's genuine people who have a heart for the community, see the poverty and think, "We just can't stand by and watch this happen."'

Trussell Trust Scotland RDO

Where Isiah 58 in particular is identified as a motivating passage for foodbanks (see Lambie 2011) the faith-based moral imperative is particularly clear:

'...remove the chains of oppression and the yoke of injustice, and let the oppressed go free. Share your food with the hungry and open your homes to the homeless poor.' (Isiah ch58 v6-7, The Bible Societies 1994, p.737)

The notion of foodbank as the enactment of this moral imperative, driven by God is also part of the narrative of how emergency food provision came to be:

'I guess what I'm saying is, foodbanks were very timely, and as a Christian organisation we'd say God knew and God knows. That's why we were, in our view provoked to do something about trying to replicate in 2004, that's when we knew we needed to do it.'

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman



The dual-focussed mission of FareShare also enacts particular moral imperatives to overcome hunger and to prevent food waste, as described by their CEO as:

‘Our vision is that no good food goes to waste. Success, for us, really looks like that all food that is surplus within the UK supply chain gets diverted and fed to people in need, before it becomes waste.’

FareShare CEO

Moral imperatives – to overcome hunger and food waste – are therefore embedded within the motivations of both organisations. These moral imperatives are in turn enacted through the performance of the systems that have been established for redistribution (to prevent hunger and food waste in the case of FareShare) and food provision (to prevent hunger and share God’s love in the case of foodbank).

The case of the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network provides a particularly insightful example of how these moral imperatives are enacted through organisational ways of working. The moral imperatives driving the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network (overcoming hunger and sharing God’s love) are performed through particular practices embedded within the whole foodbank process, and the focus here will be on two particular ones of these: the donation of food and the provision of food parcels. The donation of food is discussed as a performance of the moral imperative to relieve hunger; and explored in relation to Cloke et al’s concept of ‘extra-ordinary kindness’ – acts which are beyond ‘routine activities of care (for friends, family or neighbours, for example)’ Cloke et al (2010: 97). The process of food provision (the act of giving food parcels) can also be seen as a performance of the moral imperative to share God’s love, through Cloke et al’s (2010: 14-17, 97, 99) notion of ‘evangelism through acts’ and non-interventionist faith-based approaches where people are provided spaces to just ‘be’.

In the first instance, the moral imperative to relieve hunger is enacted through the whole process of foodbank projects, but the performance of donating food to foodbanks is a particularly interesting site to explore as a performance of this moral imperative – both by those who are running the

provision and those donating to it. Private food donation – the main way in which the Foodbank Network foodbanks access food – is treated here as a distinct site within the wider food banking ‘process’. It can be conceived as a preliminary step in the process, necessarily undertaken before provision and which involves a range of actors (supermarket shoppers, congregations, schools, and staff at local businesses). The performance of donation specifically can be understood as the performance of this moral imperative through understanding the gesture as Cloke et al (2010) describe, an act of ‘extra-ordinary’ kindness. Seen in this way, food banks provide a system for giving within which people can perform an act driven by the moral imperative against hunger – donating food.

Foodbank managers and strategic Trussell Trust personnel conceptualise the process of donation as relational, an embodiment of generosity and demonstration of care. The below quote from the Foodbank Network Director illustrates the relational qualities embedded within privately donated food stuffs: generosity; coming from all different walks of life; responding to meet need; participating actively and becoming part of the process – these qualities becoming embodied within the individual food stuffs.

‘I think the key is, as more clients come in, more food comes in, which is amazing and we’re very thankful for the public in the UK for their amazing generosity – facilitated through national supermarket collections and all kinds of different schools, churches and everything. The public has been so generous and as that need’s increased, the food donations have mirrored that, which is amazing. If there is any good news in this story of the increasing use of food banks, it’s that more people have clearly wanted to donate and have felt more engaged in the process of helping a local person in crisis.’

Trussell Trust Foodbank Network Director

It could be argued then that the donating of food to foodbanks provides a key mechanism through which people can perform a moral imperative to relieve hunger. The Foodbank Network makes this mechanism available and by doing so provides ways for participation within this morally driven system.

The moral imperative to share God’s love is also performed in these systems through the processes of giving food parcels. Whilst the data suggests that

the provision of food is a performance of faith this performance seems to be enacted in a very particular way. Interviewees went to considerable lengths to emphasise that there was no proselytising at foodbanks, that religion wasn't 'rammed down people's throats'. Instead the performance enacted through this process appears to be more closely aligned with what Cloke et al (2010: 99) observed at soup runs, more like 'evangelism through acts'.

The data provided clear demonstrations of how Foodbank practices can be seen as a representation of evangelism through action and service. In particular the ways they described how religious practice (through prayer or engagement with the gospel) was not part of how the projects ran, from recipient perspectives, but that enacting faith lies behind project motivations and forms a key part of the work; they are called to love and bless people through the practice of provision:

'we are motivated by our faith, we don't ram it down people's throat or anything like that but if you cut us open, that's what you find'

North Bristol Foodbank Manager

Whilst the faith basis therefore becomes embodied, the motivation for recipients to come to an understanding of God or faith is explicit in the hopes of some foodbank managers, for the outcomes of their work:

'There are many other things that I hope people get, my faith, I hope people understand that God loves them when they're having a bad time I mean things in my faith that come into play in my thinking but I don't necessarily articulate'

East Bristol Foodbank Manager

The non-interventionism that is characteristic of this type of 'evangelism as action' and the ways in which the practices aim to provide places of comfort, kindness and spaces to just be also comes out of the data. The notion that food is given in a supportive and comforting social space was crucial for interviewees:

'I hope it makes a difference in as much as we're bringing a little bit of ease during that three days worth of food that they get. I hope the way that we treat them and you know we try and value them and help them in their embarrassment. I hope that has a positive effect as well'

North Bristol Foodbank Manager

'we get a lot of comments that the atmosphere is really nice and people don't want to leave, they want to stay and sit and eat cake and have drinks and talk with the volunteers so it must be an inviting place for that, they don't take the food and go.'

Gleadless Valley foodbank Manager

The ways in which the Network's moral imperative to share God's love are therefore performed through the particular foodbank practices embedded in the providing of food through foodbanks. These findings suggest that moral and social aspects are at work within these systems. This suggests that whilst the systems may be identified as 'other' important social dynamics are at work which, from the perspective of those involved in the provision, may have particular value.

### **Emergency food retaining 'market' qualities**

The first subsection of this chapter set out the ways in which emergency food provision could be seen to comprise an 'other' system. The work of Midgley (2013), however, questions the notion of the otherness of surplus food in particular on the basis of a study of the qualities embedded within the food being redistributed. This part of the chapter explores her findings in relation to data collected for this research. It considers Midgley's (2013) findings and explores in particular the question of how detached and distanced the food redistributed within these systems is and in particular the market qualities which that food may retain.

Whilst Midgley's (2013) research is focussed on the qualities of the food itself, this thesis is interested in the wider dynamics of the nature and performance of emergency food provision as a social and material process. It is therefore looking at emergency food provision as a whole and how it fits within wider socio-economic contexts. Whilst the qualities which may be ascribed to the food itself are an important part of the story the emphasis goes well beyond this to look at the ways in which the provision of

emergency food is performed as a whole and the social, political-economic and cultural dynamics with which that performance intersects.

Ultimately, Midgley (2013) challenges the notion of surplus food redistribution systems as inherently other. She argues instead on the basis of her own research that systems reflect a 'continuum of food system flows and relationships' and that the food is not 'completely removed from market relations' with key market qualities such as branding being embodied within them still (Midgley 2013 1, 16-17). Midgley uses a quality framing to assess the qualities ascribed to surplus food in UK redistribution systems and finds that in the transition to surplus, 'detachment and distancing is not total' (Midgley 2013, 6). 'Not all original product qualities, such as branding and legal obligations, are detached' (p17), furthermore in transitioning into these distribution systems the food acquires new qualities including sociality, facilitation and care (17-18).

The data collected for this research could be said to support elements of Midgley's (2013) analysis. Mirroring some of her findings relating to the process of transitioning from the retail market to redistribution initiatives, the data collected highlighted the importance of the surplus discourse itself in protecting market based qualities – notably in the way it positions it apart from waste. In the data collected from FareShare, discourses of surplus and an emphasis on the usability of the food (that is in date and edible) were found throughout. This surplus discourse saw the unsalable food stuffs spoken of as the result of benign 'kinks' in the system, an unfortunate consequence rather than a stock of food stuffs which have been rejected and/or cast away (or that is substandard or low-quality). Importantly, the concept of surplus discursively distanced the food products from the idea of waste; which is spoken of in such a way as to imply that it is somehow the next stage along, when nothing is done with surplus. This discursive situating of the food which is redistributed is particularly nuanced. This could be seen to reflect the contingent, situational and contested contexts in which 'waste' is defined (see Watson and Meah 2013). But importantly for here, surplus was arguably used as a discourse for avoiding the 'otherness' of waste.

FareShare interviewees placed considerable emphasis on the fact that the food they redistributed was within date, fit for consumption and a result of kinks or quirks in the food system. The food redistributed by FareShare was described repeatedly as 'all within date, perfectly fit for purpose' (FareShare Trustee and FareShare South West Trustee). Reasons given for it being classified as surplus included: packaging having been damaged in transit; misprinted barcodes or mistakes on labels; seasonal packaging; discontinued lines; and overproduction. One FareShare depot manager also described how some supermarkets require minimum date lengths for ambient products (for example three months) and when products don't have that date life left they fail the control criteria and become surplus. This framing ultimately conveyed the notion that what was being re-distribution through their practices was perfectly good food which would otherwise be 'wasted' (or go to landfill or anaerobic digestion). The discourse of surplus was key to this being conveyed; implying this group of food stuffs was an unfortunate by-product of a less than ideal system, rather than a group of food stuffs which had been rejected.

The way surplus was discussed involved considerable nuance, and an emphasis on the ways in which the food maintained key qualities important to all consumers. The surplus discourse seems to be employed in such a way as to emphasise the closeness of the food to supermarket standards, as opposed to discarded waste. Several FareShare interviewees explicitly highlighted the distinction between surplus and waste food. It was a subtle distinction but one which appears to be important in the way quality/value is ascribed to the food stuffs.

'we should recognise actually that we're not necessarily talking about waste, we're talking about surplus, so if surplus isn't found a home for it becomes waste.'

FareShare Trustee and Trustee of FareShare South West

'It's about good food, that might otherwise go to landfill [...] So I talk about it being about surplus and waste and that's inevitable in an industry where excellence is such an important value for the consumer.'

FareShare Yorkshire Trustee

In this conceptualisation, then, 'surplus' is intercepted precisely to prevent 'waste'. This framing gives the food stuffs the status of surplus as a way of distinguishing it from 'waste'. Surplus becomes the step before waste, which appears to be defined by the process of its placement in landfill (the physical process of discarding). This enables the food to retain qualities which you would find within the more mainstream commercial food market such as branding, freshness and aesthetics.

On the basis of this analysis and previous work by Midgley (2013) it may be that the food stuffs entering into redistribution systems may not be all that far away from and may retain qualitative links to the commercial food market. However, the emergency food system as a whole is in fact 'other' in light of a range of characteristics – the fact it is run by volunteers and acquired by the needy – so ultimately when it transitions into these systems it becomes part of them. The food itself may not be far away from commercial system in which it started but it is nonetheless no longer within them.

### **Emergency food experienced as 'other'**

The findings presented so far suggest that whilst emergency food provision could, as a system, be identified as distinctly 'other' to the mainstream ways in which people obtain food in the UK today the emergency food and the systems which process it do have embedded within them moral imperatives and market based qualities of value to those involved. Identifying such a system as 'other' is not the same as providing a judgement on that system; it leaves open the question of whether this otherness or alternativeness is a good or a bad thing. To explore this notion, by right to food standards much emphasis must be placed on the experience of such systems from the perspective of those accessing them for help with food. Are they experienced as socially just and acceptable and are they progressive in the ways in which they enable people to access food? These questions form the focus of this subsection of the chapter.

Ultimately evidence suggests that emergency food systems are experienced as 'other' by those who turn to them and findings relating to experiences of stigma and embarrassment indicate that this is a difficult experience for those involved. Such embarrassment or stigma, often conceptualised around the moment of 'crossing the threshold' or 'going through the door', highlight this clearly. This conceptualisation is in itself interesting and could be seen to represent a movement into the 'otherness' of this system.

'The second thing of course, is it takes an enormous step for anybody to say, "I need help, I don't know what to do now, about food tonight." There's no way that you would just think, "Ah, it's a bit of a freebie, I will nip around the corner and get some."

Trussell Trust Exec Chairman

'It's not nice, having to rely on other people but it comes in helpful when there's nothing else, I'd rather take help rather than have my children go hungry.'

Jubilee Food Bank Client (an Independent food bank)

These quotes highlight the alienation embedded within various stages of the emergency food process from the perspective of potential recipients. The quote from a Trussell Trust member of staff conveys the difficulties involved in realising that help might be needed and in admitting that to a charitable provider. The quote above from the food bank client also highlights the disempowering lack of choice about whether or not to access this provision, especially when looking after the wellbeing others. There is much evidence already in existence about the experience of embarrassment and stigma amongst those who have to access emergency food provision (see Lambie-Mumford 2013, Tarasuk and Eakin 2005, Poppendeick 1998) and this forms a particularly problematic aspect of the provision from a right to food perspective. These findings suggest that not only is the 'otherness' of emergency food provision experienced as socially unacceptable (embodied by feelings of stigma and embarrassment in having to access it), it also represents an exclusion from the mainstream commercial food market, where people are left with no choice but to receive charitable emergency help.



Questions can also be raised about the material 'otherness' or difference of the experience of acquiring food from emergency food providers; specifically, in terms of the experience of obtaining food from religious spaces as opposed to at a supermarket or other commercial space. Some of the projects visited for the research involved giving out food in church buildings. So, even if the relational experience inside is free from religious discourse, recipients are still required to enter a space which is in itself religious. The pictures included below provide examples of religious foodbank distribution centres in particular.

Pictures 1 and 2 are of the buildings in which two different foodbanks distributed food parcels. Obtaining food from these projects involved going into a church building which was highly visible as such with prominent signs and religious symbols or messages on them. Some of these buildings may also have physical barriers to entry. In the case of the building in Picture 1, recipients are required to press a bell and wait until a volunteer comes to let them in. As is common practice for foodbank distribution centres, when a session is open a foodbank sign is placed outside the building to help people know where to go (see Picture 2). A consequence of this is therefore that it is visible when people are entering the building for reasons of obtaining food parcels.



Picture 1: Foodbank Centre 1



Picture 2: Foodbank Centre 2

Picture 3, below, is an example of a room in which foodbank parcels are distributed. Further to the importance of having to step into formally religious buildings there is an added layer of consideration of the materiality of the rooms in which food is distributed. In many instances the spaces incorporate

religious images or symbols, as illustrated in the below. In Picture 3 this room is set out for a foodbank session and is part of a small chapel on the site of a larger church.



Picture 3: Foodbank Centre 3

The lack of substantive data from recipients makes it impossible for this study to assess how the materiality of the spaces in which emergency food is provided is experienced by recipients. What this analysis is able to illustrate is just how different the materiality of emergency food project spaces are, compared to mainstream commercial outlets. This analysis raises a question for future research. Is the moral imperative of sharing God's love, even when it is in practice non-proselytising, ultimately a disempowering experience of 'other' due to the materiality of the religious spaces in which it is enacted?

A key dimension to the question of how emergency food provision is experienced relates to notions of exclusion. Previous research on food poverty highlights the social exclusion embedded within the experience of not being able to access food from mainstream sources or having to access them in constrained ways due to lack of financial resources (Dowler et al 2001, Hitchman et al 2002). The data collected for this research highlighted particular elements of exclusion attributed to accessing these systems in relation to experiences of othering and disempowerment.

Building on the work of Lister (2004, p100) on othering with respect to poverty, the ways in which “neediness” or “hungry” are constructed in these systems could be a way in which those accessing emergency food are ‘othered through language’. In particular, moral imperatives to “feed the hungry” could construct recipients as ‘passive objects of concern’ (Lister 2004, p115). Furthermore, the ways in which ‘need’ for emergency food is constructed is arguably an additional othering process when people are identified as ‘needy’ and labelled ‘in need’ of emergency food provision by definition of their exclusion from or lack of access to mainstream commercial food systems.

A further element of exclusion experienced within these systems is that of disempowerment. The lack of agency recipients have in terms of both accessing mainstream commercial food systems and within emergency systems themselves can be particularly disempowering. This leads onto the subject of the next empirical Chapter (5) regarding power and agency both of and within emergency food systems. But it is important here in relation to the disempowering nature of the experience of emergency food provision and the experience of needing that provision as a result of exclusion from mainstream systems.

Having established the nature of emergency food provision as ‘other’ towards the beginning of the chapter, in critically assessing the consequences of the ‘otherness’ of these systems, the findings presented here indicate that the experience can be problematic by right to food acceptability standards given the lived experiences of social unacceptability and exclusion. In the first instance the material otherness of this provision – in terms of accessing this food from places which are very distinct from commercial outlets – is particularly important for understanding the nature of the ‘otherness’ of these systems. Furthermore the ways in which need for and the experience of these systems are embarrassing and disempowering for recipients is also important with significant consequences for how these systems can be seen in right to food terms.

## Conclusion

The central pre-occupation of this chapter has been to ascertain whether emergency food systems represent a distinctly 'other' system to the mainstream, socially acceptable means by which people access food in the UK today and to critically assess the nature of this (potentially 'other') system. In the first instance this chapter concludes that emergency food provision does constitute a distinctly 'other' system of food acquisition which sits very much apart from the mainstream ways by which most people access food today (namely through commercial markets and shopping).

The processes of obtaining this food have been shown to be distinctly 'other' –given to needy people as opposed to chosen by an active consumer, and outside mechanisms of economic exchange. The data and work by others does illustrate that there are many layers of nuance to this othering process, that embedded within these systems were qualities which still link to the market (such as branding) and moral imperatives which were driving the work of these organisations. Indeed Midgley (2013, 7) suggests these practices are analytically constructed as other, rather than empirically so. It is concluded here, on the basis of this research however that there is in fact something distinctly and unavoidably 'other' about this provision. Both in terms of its performance (of food sourcing and provisioning and the ways in which that provision is accessed) and in the discourse of need and hunger which are embedded within it given Lister's (2004, p122) highlighting of the 'power of discourse ... in constructing 'the poor' as 'different' or 'Other''. These systems are also different from, for example, receiving left-overs from friends or family – in light of the power dynamics embedded within emergency food provision and the recipients' 'needy' circumstance. Furthermore, and more importantly still, whilst the emergency food system might be identifiable as 'other', it is also experienced as other and as a significant form of social exclusion.

The second conclusion of this chapter rests on the question of whether this 'other' system could be said to be acceptable by right to food standards. Ultimately, the otherness of emergency food provision is the critical factor in

assessing the acceptability of the experience of obtaining food through emergency food provision. The beginning of the chapter set up what a mainstream food acquisition experience looks like in the UK today. These experiences are dominated by commercial markets and most food obtained through shopping (Meah 2013). The neediness of emergency food recipients embodies their exclusion from this mainstream food experience and therein lies the problem for acceptability; the social injustice of exclusion from such social food 'norms' is key. In emergency food systems individuals become receivers of food, rather than purchasers and selectors of food – stripped of their agency and choice (a key value in the contemporary food system in the UK). Whilst the increasing prominence of emergency food provision in media and public discourses may be working to spread information about how these work in the hope of overcoming some of the stigma or marginalisation attached to these initiatives they are still nonetheless very different experiences of obtaining food from that enjoyed by those who are not living in poverty or financial crisis. This is the central concern of a right to food analysis – the lack of choice, the vulnerability and neediness, and the otherness of the experience of emergency food is highly problematic.

## Chapter 5

### Power and Agency in Emergency Food Provision

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Sustainability, by Right to Food standards, requires adequate amounts of food to be accessible in the short, medium and longer term. As a practical response to the problem of food poverty, this means that in emergency food systems both the ability of emergency providers to make enough food *available* in the immediate and longer terms; and the ability of recipients to *access* this food through these organisations now and into the future are important points of analysis. In order to explore whether this is true of the systems which are emerging in the UK, this chapter explores questions of availability and accessibility through an analytical framework of power.

For the purposes of this chapter, power is seen as the ‘capacity for exercising agency’ (Elder-Vass 2010, p87). For questions of sustainability (as the availability and accessibility of emergency food) the agency of emergency food providers to secure a food supply and the agency of people in need to access it are particularly important points for empirical exploration. Given the importance of structure embedded within the conceptualisations and definitions of food poverty and the right to food adopted for the thesis, agency (as power) is also understood in this chapter to occur within the context of structures which shape it. In particular, the chapter explores the agency of emergency food providers to make food available within the structures of the food system on the one hand and the agency of people to access that food within the structures of emergency food provision on the other. In arriving at conclusions from the findings presented, the work of Poppendieck (1998) on the ‘seven deadly ‘ins’’ of emergency food – particularly instability and inaccessibility – is drawn on.

In exploring the agency of emergency food providers to make food available, the chapter focusses on the relationship between these organisations and the wider food system by exploring their agency in relation to two key aspects of this dynamic: in sourcing food; and in corporate partnerships and

future planning. The direct sourcing of food is clearly imperative in order for emergency food organisations to make food available now and into the future, but, as will become apparent from this chapter, corporate partnerships with food retailers and others are also important aspects of how these organisations are able to operate now and are shaping the way they will operate into the future.

In order to come to a better understanding of the agency of people to access the food available the chapter looks at the relationship between those potential recipients and the emergency food systems they are (trying to) access in terms of both the processes of accessing this provision and the particular mechanisms for exercising agency available to people when they are within these systems. Specifically, the ways in which particular processes and related factors facilitate or block the exercising of agency to access this provision are examined (for example referral processes, opening times and limits on how many times someone can receive support) and particular principles which are lacking in these systems (notably rights for recipients and accountability of charitable organisations) are also seen as important factors in relation to the agency of people when they are in these systems, providing as they would do, formal levers for recipient power.

### **Organisational Agency in the Food System**

The ability to source food for distribution (either through securing surplus or private donations) and the ability to ensure on-going practice to distribute that food underpin the capacity and sustainability of the work of both case study organisations. This chapter analytically situates an assessment of these elements within the context of the wider structures of the food system. This was determined as a result of an iterative analytical process which highlighted the important ways in which these organisations are tied up with and located within the wider food system. In terms of food sourcing for FareShare, surplus food is taken from within the food chain and so is inherently tied up with the wider system; for Foodbanks food is donated in large part by individual donors but national food drives (where food is



collected from customers at stores from a national supermarket chain across the country on a set weekend) have become increasingly important ways of soliciting those donations. More specifically, this food sourcing can be situated within the food retail structure in the UK given the predominant role played by food retailers in terms of providing access to both surplus and customers on a nation-wide scale. Ensuring on-going practice can also readily be situated within the context of the wider food system given the importance of corporate partnerships for funding and other forms of in-kind support which facilitate the work of these organisations, as will be demonstrated.

The findings presented here suggest that the agency of case study organisations is shaped and determined in important ways in both of these aspects (food sourcing and ongoing practice) by the structures of the food industry, particularly the food retail system in the UK. They indicate that whilst both organisations take strategic approaches to food sourcing, FareShare is ultimately dependent on what food is made available to them through retailers' supply chains and whilst Foodbank donations are dependent on individual giving, national food drives and prominent supermarket chains are an increasingly prominent mechanism for the network to secure donations and brings important added value to the franchise, saving volunteers time and energy setting up food drives. In terms of partnerships and planning, the findings indicate that both organisations take a strategic approach to these partnerships and horizon scanning – particularly the Trussell Trust who appear to take a consciously diversified approach to these agreements. However, the data does suggest that the finer points of detail in these partnerships are not necessarily within providers control and that these partnerships can have knock-on effects on the shape of on-going practice and organisational capacity to plan into the future.

These findings have important implications for what we can say about the sustainability of food availability in emergency food systems, given the dangers of both organisations becoming dependent on their relationships with the food retail industry for the sourcing of food. In addition, the lack of control these organisations can exercise over corporate partnerships

(including those with food retailers) means that their future planning can be limited and on-going and future practice (in terms of what they provide and how) can be shaped by the terms of these agreements in ways which may not have been anticipated.

In the case of FareShare, the findings demonstrate that the majority of surplus food redistributed by the network is sourced through national-level relationships, rather than locally at the depots. In building these national relationships strategic level staff at FareShare have a policy of going 'through' the retailers to 'open up' surplus within their supply chains. The data indicates that the ratios of nationally to locally sourced surplus can vary between depots. Data from the South West depot also suggests that recording systems can imply that arrangements are national when they are only practiced locally (for example a nationally operating organisation which only delivers to the South West depot). The FareShare CEO talked about how the ratio varies (sometimes 100%, sometimes 80%) but said that most:

'has a genesis at the national partnership. Which makes sense when you think about the strategy of trying to access that food through the retailers.'

FareShare CEO

The apparent reliance of depots on national arrangements for the sourcing of surplus raises several questions for the agency of FareShare at different scales of operation. In the first instance it raises a question of the capacity of Depots to secure local arrangements: in a food system dominated by national scale logistics perhaps it is only at a strategic level that sustainable and practical arrangements can be made? From Depots' perspectives as well, issues of capacity in terms of time available to cultivate relationships may be an issue. A second question is raised in terms of the ability of Depots to diversify their food sources, beyond national arrangements, to protect their levels of incoming food. Again, this may be due to the nature of the food system and/or capacity at projects, but the reliance on national-level arrangements indicates that Depots themselves have very little agency in determining the nature of relationships with food industry. The importance of these questions relating to the capacity and ability of depots to source food

directly is highlighted in the quote below from the manager of a depot which appears to be particularly pro-active in terms of local sourcing of surplus:

‘Then, locally, we try and do as much as we can, as well, for obvious reasons. Firstly, we need to be sustainable. We need to know that if our national office, for whatever reason, stopped offering us food we could still get food out to our clients. Also, it’s the right thing to do. If we can get food from a local area, then it’s fewer miles spent.’

FareShare South West Operations Director

The emphasis placed by FareShare on going “through” retailers to open up mechanisms for surplus further highlights the importance of the ways the food system works for shaping how the case study organisations are forced to work and their agency in determining this. The below quote shows that this way of working was consciously reactive; FareShare established practices and ways of working on the basis of how the industry was structured and fitting into those structures:

‘My strategy was very much that the most efficient way for us to access a food industry was to reflect the way that the food industry is structured, with the retailers holding that dominant position between the customers and the supply chain.’

FareShare CEO

Despite this very strategic approach, where national team staff build relationships with the most prominent retailers to open up their extensive supply chains in order to access surplus, the data highlights the fragility of these relationships – from the perspectives of both FareShare Depots and the Community Food Members who receive and serve the food. These data highlight the unpredictability of the food supplied this way, on how FareShare are not able to reliably supply particular volumes or particular types of food, posing challenges for Community Food Members who cite frustrations with the unpredictability and sometimes inappropriateness of the food they receive.

From the Depots’ perspective, the findings indicate that whilst national level FareShare staff may be able to develop strategic relationships with and through retailers, control over the outcome of these and how they regularly

translate into food received by depots appears limited. As this quote shows, when what comes through is more limited:

'Luckily, we've never been in a position where we haven't been able to fulfil minimum orders to our projects. So, just some weeks they [CFMs] have lots of choice, and a bit extra, and other weeks it's less so.'

FareShare South West Operations Director

From the perspective of Community Food Members, overall many feel FareShare food is beneficial, but the findings suggest the agency of FareShare is limited, demonstrated by: the inappropriateness of food for CFM clients; insufficient amounts of food and unpredictable types and amounts of food; little flexibility in what CFMs receive; and the fact that all CFMs had to source additional food from elsewhere. These data furthermore serve to highlight that the agency of Community Food Members (CFMs) within the structure of the FareShare system is relatively limited – to responding to what is on offer and choosing from what is available. CFMs are notified in advance of what is available for them to choose from and how much they will get. However, the data also emphasises FareShare's own limitations, raising questions of how much agency FareShare have to acquire the kinds and the volumes of food that their clients (the CFMs) would like.

Some interviewees talked about the inappropriateness of some of the food stuffs they were offered for the kind of project they were or the kind of people they served. For example the head chef at a large homeless project, providing hot breakfasts and lunches everyday talked about how he would rather have meal ingredients than snacks from FareShare:

'It's OK, it's like I said to you rather than send me 6 cases of crisps or a box of polos and a box of KitKats I'd rather it be something more substantial like twenty pound of chuck steak that I can actually use on a lunchtime service rather than, you know, just thinking what am I going to do with 6 cases of Jelly Babies.'

Archer Project, Head Chef

The manager of the Bristol Refugee Rights initiative also raised the issue of culturally appropriate foods and the difficulties their project has handling and distributing meat that is not halal:

‘that’s one of the things about FareShare for us, that most of the meat we can’t use because we only serve Halal food, so that’s in terms of meat.’

Bristol Refugee Rights Manager

The unpredictability and limited volume of the food CFMs received on a weekly basis was also highlighted by interviewees. In the quote below the manager of a sheltered housing scheme talks about the dilemma her team has when there is not enough of a product to share equally amongst the residents and indicates that on some occasions staff might intercept the food to avoid conflict:

‘and then you get some things and there’s only 12 of them and you’ve got 14 people and then you’ve got to make a decision about whether we [the staff] just eat them!’

Emmaus Project Manager

These quotes highlight on the one hand the relative lack of agency CFMs have in the FareShare structure (choosing from what depots received and can ration out between all their projects) and the ultimately responsive (to the structure of the UK food system) work of FareShare. All CFMs visited sourced other food from different sources, either purchasing it with funds or soliciting or benefitting from private donations or other surplus (often on a local shop-by-shop basis). Indeed, this diversified food sourcing approach is necessary; FareShare’s Director of Operations highlights below that this is encouraged to avoid dependency.

‘the one thing we don’t do is create a dependency on FareShare for any charity because we never know what food we can give them, we never know what quantities we’ve got to give them so to create a dependency would actually put people in more of that food poverty bracket than they are now, so we are really a top up charity not a whole solution.’

FareShare National Director of Operations

In fact the above quote neatly sums up the findings from this section as a whole. FareShare gets what they can and distributes it between members; but what that food is and how much there is of it (so long as it fulfils certain food safety and other standards criteria) appears largely beyond their control.

Given the Foodbank Network's predominant reliance on privately donated foodstuffs, there are some distinctive aspects to the power dynamics within their food sourcing mechanisms. Despite the central reliance on public goodwill for food sources, their processes also highlight ways in which the Network's own agency is affected by the food retail structure, notably through the arrangements they have for national food collections days with several of the largest retailers.

The agency of foodbanks in food sourcing relies in the first instance on public goodwill to donate food stuffs. In some of the strategic interviews with Trussell Trust personnel a concern was conveyed for a time in the future when foodbanks and donating food is no longer 'flavour of the month' (Head of Fundraising).

'Who knows how long it will last? What we are going to say is "Reep Hay when the sun shines." It will not last forever, Hannah, I don't believe, just because of the nature of business.'

Trussell Trust Northern Ireland RDO

Beyond a concern for natural distraction away from the foodbank cause, the Trust's PR and Marketing Manger highlighted a further challenge that can be foreseen and the impact this might have on the Network:

'as you get bigger more people question, challenge and sometimes try to discredit you; you start having conversations with people who are not 100% supportive.'

PR and Marketing Manager

The ability of the Network to maintain levels of food donation is therefore a key challenge into the future. However, these Foodbank Network food sourcing mechanisms are shaped in practice by the structure of the food retail system. Through national level partnerships, Trussell Trust foodbanks are able to hold collection days at stores throughout the country (with local foodbanks collecting at their local shops). These arrangements are seen as significantly added value for franchisees, as many projects previously struggled to obtain the authorisation to run them at individual shop level. However, these arrangements are on medium or short term (in years) arrangements and will be reviewed thereafter.

‘But having that – two supermarket things already organised a year, I would pay anything for that. Because the amount of time it took our guy to get into one of the supermarkets, the faff was just so almighty it was ridiculous so it was flipping brilliant, loved it and now we know that every year we have a minimum of two shopping weekends, you know, it’s nice on your mind.’

Gleadless Valley Foodbank Manager

‘These relationships have big, significant benefits to the ongoing development of Foodbanks. It is certainly a plus when you are talking to community groups and trying to get them to engage with you at the very beginning.’

Trussell Trust North Wales RDO

Given the growth in the number of foodbanks and in the amount of food parcels being distributed, national supermarket collections are likely to remain key to the ways in which the Network as a whole and individual foodbank projects are able to supply themselves with food and a key determinant for how much volunteer capacity will be required to do so (more if these drives have to be arranged and publicised locally). The increasing level of knowledge of how a food bank might be run without paying for a foodbank franchise may also mean these national food drives could become an increasingly important selling point for the foodbank franchise. Therefore, although in a different way to FareShare, the agency of the Foodbank Network in sourcing food could also be said to be influenced in important ways by the structure of the food system and by the goodwill of food retailers. It appears that this is not only true now but could be increasingly the case into the future, where both organisations could become more dependent on their relationships with food retailers to source food in the face of on-going and future need.

Whilst the findings presented above discussed specifically the agency these organisations hold in the sourcing of food for sustained availability, data was also collected relating to the agency of these organisations in terms of corporate partnerships and future planning. These are also significant factors in ensuring the sustainability of food access given the ways in which these partnerships (through funding and in-kind support) become part of or enable operations within these organisations. Whilst both case study organisations

had partnerships with a range of private companies, relationships with partners from the food industry were particularly prominent.

The findings suggest that the case study organisations exercised agency in these partnerships in particular through: maximising opportunities which present themselves as a consequence of the currently high profile of food assistance and hunger; being clear and forthright in their position when agreeing terms and conditions of partnerships; horizon scanning and planning for when short and medium term partnerships end; and diversifying partnership relationships as much as possible to avoid dependency. The data does, however, raise a question over the agency of the organisations to manage and have authority over the detail of some of these relationships and the consequences this might have for them as organisations. In particular, FareShare running food drives as part of retail partnerships when their aim is to reduce surplus and the Foodbank Network taking surplus when the act of donation and giving are central to their ethos are two examples which are discussed.

For FareShare partnerships with private sector organisations were largely food industry-based whereas for the Foodbank Network these varied considerably (including food, banking, logistics and manufacturing sectors). The nature of these partnerships also varied. FareShare's relationship with the food industry centres largely on partners opening up surplus food for them to redistribute. Other partners may send staff to volunteer or help in other ways. The Foodbank Network's partnerships varied in nature and they benefitted from staff being mentored by people from within private sector partners, food donations organised at offices and funding. The data indicates that the case study organisations take strategic approaches to partnership working, strategic in both the sense of considering the impact on their organisations (and mission) and particularly in the case of FareShare, but also in the Trussell Trust, operating at a strategic level to solicit these partnerships.

Strategic interviews from both case study organisations talked about corporate partnerships, their importance and their role. The basis of these



partnerships appear to be varied, involving opening up surplus or food products (for FareShare and on occasion Foodbank), sending retail partner staff to volunteer (both case studies), sharing expertise in the form of mentoring or consultancy (for the Foodbank Network). The ways in which interviewees described processes of securing partnerships and the practice of these partnerships revealed several dimensions to their apparent organisational agency and the ways in which it interacts with the structures of the food industry.

In securing partnerships, the data suggests that the case study organisations take a strategic approach to maximising the opportunities which are being presented to them as a consequence of the high profile of issues of food assistance and food poverty. The data below suggests that the case studies may also be benefitting from the competitive nature of the food retail industry:

‘We were well aware that actually although they’re ultra competitive, one of the things that the retailers do all of the time is copy each other. If they see something working then the others pile in there. That’s why Asda have done a food drive with Trussell, and both of us have done this partnership with Tesco.’

FareShare CEO

‘five supermarkets have come out and said, “We want you to do Foodbank collections.” [...] We did a first national Foodbank collection with Tesco. All the Tesco staff got excited because our teams were there talking about the work. Their teams could talk to our teams and they could then talk to the customers. Some of the other supermarkets visited those projects on that day and saw that and heard it. Now, they all want to do it.’

Trussell Trust Operations Director

These findings seem significant in terms of the agency of the case studies in terms of partnership development – at the time of the research. At least for the Trussell Trust, far from going to lengths to pursue partnerships:

‘Because of our profile, a lot of companies have been coming to us now’

Trussell Trust Corporate partnerships manager

In addition to the profile of the case studies and the food poverty agenda, the data also suggests that the organisations are consciously tapping into Corporate Social Responsibility agendas when looking to secure partnerships:

‘we should be saying to food manufacturers and retailers look, we can help you avoid waste, we can help give you lots of corporate social responsibility advantages, brownie points, because we’re working with you to minimise waste, we’re saving you millions in terms of cost and we’re feeding people, how about that? That’s pretty good in your annual corporate social responsibility report and that’s why Sainsbury’s has signed up, that’s why Waitrose has signed up, Tesco’s has signed up...’

FareShare National Trustee and Trustee of FareShare South West

In the process of securing partnership agreements, it appears from the data that the case study organisations are clear and forthright in their position when agreeing terms and conditions.

‘We have not gone anywhere where we haven’t wanted to go. We have worked on exactly the same ethos as we do with grant funding: “This is what we do. If you want to fund us to do this, thank you very much. We will have your money. If you come back to us and say, ‘The conditions are that you change your model here or you do this,’ which would have a significant impact, then we wouldn’t take the funding.” In the same way, we wouldn’t take the corporate deal either.’

Trussell Trust Head of Fundraising

‘No, I think we’re challenging them and by working with them we’re in a much, much stronger place to influence. The phrase we use internally all the time is, “We will not help a retailer polish their brand, unless that retailer is committed to and delivering on our agenda”.’

FareShare CEO

The Trussell Trust also appear to be conscious of taking into account the motivations of potential partners and the knock on consequences for how productive the relationship is likely to be:

‘You’ve got the ones who want to... When you look at the motivation, some are like, “We want to engage our staff in something practical and something current, let’s do food collections.” Other people are like, “We really believe in Trussell Trust, we want to invest in you, let’s work together and create a partnership that works.”’

Trussell Trust Corporate Partnerships Manager

The data also suggests, however, that the Trussell Trust in particular takes a strategic approach to horizon scanning and planning for when short and medium term partnerships come to an end.

‘We know that somewhere down the line, the partnership will end. They want to do different things for different people. For us, that is important because it gives us breathing space to get the stuff we need to run, but it also gives us that breathing space to think about what we are going to do when the partnership is there.’

Trussell Trust Operations Director

Furthermore, the Trust also appear to take as diversified an approach as possible to partnership arrangements to avoid them becoming dependent on any particular sets of arrangements:

‘I think there are risks. We know there are risks around dependency, being in corporate relationships. But we agreed early on with Tesco’s that there was no discussion about exclusivity. So we’ve got relationships with the other supermarkets, they’re warm, they’re different. But if one bit goes wrong or whatever, we can ride another horse if we need to.’

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman

The findings presented here suggest that the case study organisations take strategic approaches to securing and managing partnership relations and that they may wield particular power in the negotiation of these in the current climate of the high public profile of hunger and food banking. However, other data collected does raise questions about the power dynamics of these relationships in practice – how tailored they are to the needs of the case studies and the ways in which knock on effects may be shaping the case study organisations in ways that were not foreseen or intended. In the case of FareShare the introduction of food drives, to incentivise retail partners is explored below and in the case of the Foodbank Network, the ways in which amounts collected at food drives is making them re-think ways of working is explored.

FareShare began doing food drives (first at Sainsbury’s stores then at Tesco) as an integral part of their relationship with these retailers. This has, however caused tension amongst some involved with depots who feel that food drives undermine their waste message:

‘FareShare was fundamentally set up to avoid waste. It was there to deal with surplus. It was not there to do food collections at Sainsbury’s and to take food that wasn’t waste.’

FareShare National Trustee and Trustee of FareShare South West

‘A good example of where they [FareShare aims] come into conflict would be, for example, doing a food drive with Sainsbury’s or Tesco, where the general public are being asked to donate a product, because that’s not surplus. However, what that does is enable us to align our brand to retailers in a public way, to their consumers, which has a transformational effect on the supply chain’s view and attitude of us. So the ends justify the means in terms of making surpluses [more accessible], and building relationships.’

FareShare CEO

From data from the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network there appears to be one main area in which corporate partnerships may have influenced decisions to enter into different territory - the receipt of surplus food and donated product in bulk (though not necessarily surplus) direct from manufacturers (see donations from Kellogg’s detailed in CEBR 2013).

The ways in which partnership power dynamics impact upon the agency of the case study organisations in their future planning is interesting to note here as well. The ways in which partnerships with the food industry in particular are likely to have considerable impact was touched on by interviewees. The Trussell Trust, for example are re-thinking ways of working in response to the volume of food being collected at retail partners’ food drives.

‘On the side of life with the likes of Tesco and whatnot, it may change our strategic thinking. This has always been a charity that franchises and sets up a local foodbank. We are now thinking, and we are only thinking but I am going to say it anyway: “Do we set logistical hubs up throughout the country?”

If we decide to collect from supermarkets, the food could be stored where local charities, not just foodbanks, could draw down food. It has already been donated by the public.’

Trussell Trust Operations Director

For FareShare this power dynamic is arguably even more profound, where they are dependent on food industry relationships (opened up largely for them through relationships with retailers) for the surplus food they are able to

distribute. Not being able to predict or be assured of how these relationships and surplus supply will be maintained into the future is particularly problematic for the purposes of future planning.

'[amount of food distributed] it's all to do with success of securing enough from the food industry.'

FareShare CEO

The findings presented here relating to organisational agency in ensuring the availability of food through food sourcing and corporate partnerships have provided important insight into how this agency is determined by the structure of the wider food system. In particular, this analysis suggests that whilst both organisations take strategic approaches to facilitating food sourcing (FareShare through national level partnerships and agreements and the Trussell Trust through public messages and partnerships with supermarkets to arrange food drives) ultimately these sources are vulnerable and influenced in important ways by forces outside organisational control. FareShare is dependent on retailers and their supply partners for opening up the surplus for them to intercept and as the experiences of CFMs imply, they are placed in an ultimately reactive position in terms of the food they are able to provide. From the perspective of the Trussell Trust, whilst food sourcing is highly diversified (in terms of receipt from various different groups from across society) supermarket collection days are an increasingly important mechanism through which these sources are sought.

In terms of partnership working the findings suggest that the case study organisations adopt strategic approaches to the securing and management of these partnerships, exercising agency through maximising opportunities which are presented to them and appealing to Corporate Social Responsibility agendas, being clear and forthright when establishing the terms of partnerships and practicing horizon scanning and processes of partnership diversification when looking to the medium and long term future of partnership arrangements. However, the power imbalances embedded within these partnerships have been found to have knock-on effects in terms of on-going practice and the capacity of the case studies to plan into the future.

It appears that whilst both case study organisations exercise the various mechanisms of agency they have within these spheres this agency is ultimately determined by the structures of the contemporary UK food system – most notably, the (dominant) supermarket retail system. The power this affords to retailers in terms of preventing access to surplus or customers nationwide and in terms of the nature of partnership agreements could have a profound impact on the profile, working and futures of the case studies. These findings are significant in the way they highlight the ultimate vulnerability and instability of the agency these organisations hold for making food available in a sustainable way. Food sourcing is vulnerable to being severely limited where access to surplus or customers is not granted by retailers on scales previously enjoyed. The nature of partnership agreements – what these organisations get from them and the costs at which they come – can also have knock on effects in terms of organisational capacity to plan into the future and their ways of working in the immediate term.

### **Recipient agency in emergency food systems**

The agency of potential recipients to access emergency food when they need it is an important part of assessing the sustainability of emergency food systems from the perspective of those vulnerable to or experiencing food poverty. By the right to food standard food must be available and accessible in the short, medium and longer term and this part of the chapter explores the question of the agency of individuals to access the food available within these systems. Several dynamics are explored here and the agency of recipients in relation to them examined. The processes and logistics of *gaining access* to emergency food projects are discussed in relation to agency in the first instance and in the second key mechanisms which are seen as important in ensuring and enabling *agency within these systems* – accountability and rights – are discussed. The findings show that the lack of accountability of the organisations, the variable accessibility of projects and the lack of rights and entitlements recipients are attributed mean that these systems are not able to provide sustainable sources of support for help with

food. As long as people cannot access as much food as they need, for as long as they need, when they need it and do not have any rights or way of holding organisations to account within these systems, we must look elsewhere for responses which meet right to food standards.

In terms of practical access issues and the agency of people in gaining access to emergency food, both procedural and logistical aspects can be considered. Whilst there is significant variability in terms of how emergency food projects of all kinds operate, particular features are worth discussing here. From the data collected on how the national organisations and local projects work, several access processes have the potential to inhibit the agency of people to obtain necessary help with emergency food, namely eligibility criteria, gatekeeping processes and limits on how much food can be obtained.

Some kinds of emergency food projects employ eligibility criteria to a greater or lesser degree. This could be informal in terms of a project being targeted at a certain group, but not exclusive to them (for example a meal programme in a homeless project which allows others in need to attend). Or, these criteria could be incorporated more formally. For example, as discussed in Lambie (2011) the Trussell Trust foodbank processes stipulate that recipients must be within some kind of 'managed process', meaning they are plugged into a system or service which is dealing with and that will resolve the crisis which has driven them to a foodbank. This could mean that particular populations – notably asylum seekers or failed asylum seekers and roofless homeless people – may be excluded from eligibility on the basis of their situation not necessarily having a resolution and the fact that foodbanks can only provide food for limited periods of time.

In some instances projects may have gatekeeping processes in place, operating referral systems that people have to go through to access emergency food. This is particularly the case in Trussell Trust foodbanks where the voucher referral system is key to how the projects work. In order to obtain food from a foodbank you must have a voucher from a partner organisation within the local community for example health visiting services,

advice centres or schools. This voucher system is also how the 'managed process' criteria is rationalised and operationalised by foodbanks; those people holding vouchers to distribute are workers at services which would be dealing with or assisting people with the crisis which led them to require emergency food. These gatekeeping processes are important in terms of people's ability to access emergency food systems for several key reasons. Firstly, people would need to be accessing mainstream services (such as health, social care and social security services). Secondly, foodbanks do not necessarily give vouchers to every such service in their local community – relationships are built at the discretion of foodbanks - so not only do people have to be accessing mainstream services, they have to be accessing the right (i.e. voucher holding) services.

Another procedure which could limit people's agency to access emergency food systems is the existence of limits to the amount of help people could receive. The foodbank model has – as discussed in various chapters in the thesis – a so called 'three voucher rule' which limits the amount of food parcels people can receive to three per crisis (see Lambie-Mumford 2013A). This means that even when people have accessed the system they do not necessarily hold the agency to determine how long they receive help for.

In addition to the way in which processes impact on the agency of people to access help from emergency food systems, logistical aspects can also be considered here. The first is one of geography and physical accessibility when there may be a lack of any emergency food projects in certain areas or the lack of distribution centres in the case of foodbanks (locations where food parcels can be collected from) in places that people can reach. Previous research (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014) highlights the lack of comprehensive, systematic documentation of what emergency food projects are in existence. There may also, therefore, be a further barrier to access in terms of lack of knowledge; not knowing about the projects which are in existence or how to access them.

Even for projects which are physically accessible and that people know how to access further logistical issues may be encountered. In the first instance



projects and foodbank distribution centres can sometimes open on only a few occasions a week, for short periods of time. This may pose logistical issues for people depending on if or when they work or have caring commitments. Furthermore, these distributions centres and projects can be in religious settings (as discussed in Chapter 4) which can also prove a barrier to access for those who are not religious.

Therefore, particular barriers – both logistical and procedural – can potentially limit the agency people have in accessing help from emergency systems at the time they need it. Depending on the structure of these systems they may reside outside eligibility criteria or not be accessing the services which refer people to projects. Where such referral processes exist people, by definition, are unlikely to be able to determine their own need for themselves and even when judged to be in need and sent to a project they may not be able to access it for as long as they may feel they require. Physical access barriers may also exist in terms of projects existing locally and open and accessible at times of convenience.

Once people are in these emergency food systems however there are several key aspects which could promote recipient agency: where recipients have rights within the system; or have the ability to hold the organisations to account. Importantly, within emergency food systems, recipients are not afforded rights and the provision is not seen as an entitlement (see the discussion of Tarasuk and Eakin 2005 in Chapter 4). This contrasts for example to consumer rights in retail systems on the one hand and citizens' rights in social security systems on the other. Similarly, these charitable organisations, unlike statutory bodies or to some limited extent retailers (in terms of consumer power), cannot be held accountable to those that require the provision. There are very few if any accountability mechanisms that people can employ. This means that when people have accessed these emergency food systems once they are within them they lack key mechanisms for exercising agency such as having entitlements or being able to hold organisations to account.

These findings mean that people have very little agency in terms of accessing emergency food. This access can be obstructed by processes of referral and eligibility thresholds as well as logistical issues forming physical barriers to the provision. Once access has been gained, however, the systems afford recipients very little agency; they are not given rights and have very little recourse to hold organisations to account. This means that access to food through emergency systems is not sustainable from (potential) recipient perspectives, given the lack of agency people have in gaining access to the systems themselves and, once they are in these systems, to the levels and standards of support they may require.

## **Conclusion**

The findings presented here are significant because they indicate that similar dynamics may be at work in these UK based emergency food systems as were identified by Poppendieck (1998) in the United States. In discussing the findings of her study Poppendieck (1998, pp201-230) identified what she called the ‘seven deadly “ins” of emergency food’: insufficiency; inappropriateness; nutritional inadequacy; instability; inaccessibility; inefficiency; and indignity. Two of these “ins” are particularly significant when discussing the findings of this chapter and the questions of the sustainability of food access in emergency systems: instability and inaccessibility.

Poppendieck (1998, 216-221) discussed the ‘instability’ of emergency food provision in the USA on the basis of her findings in relation to the unpredictability of food supply, unreliability of financial support and dependence on volunteers. The former chimes particularly with the findings of this chapter that highlight the instability of the supply of food within these systems and the vulnerability of on-going practice to changes in partnerships with provide much needed financial and in-kind resources. Similarly, Poppendieck’s (1998, p221-225) findings on ‘inaccessibility’ identify parallel issues of gaps in coverage, physical accessibility of projects, inconvenient opening times and discrepancy between numbers likely to be in need and numbers of people helped by projects.

The findings presented in this chapter, on the sustainability of the food provided through emergency projects leads to three particular conclusions. In the first instance, the structures in which both actors examined in this chapter (emergency food organisations and people trying to gain access to them) operate ultimately constrain their agency. The structure of the food industry – particularly the food retail industry – constrains the agency of emergency food organisations to make food available; and the structure of emergency food systems – in terms of access procedures and ways of working – constrains the agency of people trying to access that food.

By right to food standards, in light of the findings presented in this chapter the second conclusion is that the availability of food within these systems is not sustainable. This availability is vulnerable to the dynamics embedded in relationships with the food industry in terms of both food sourcing and partnerships and future planning. To enable sustainable food sourcing both organisations rely on retailers. In the case of fareshare this is to ‘open up’ surplus in their food chains and in the case of foodbanks to open up their stores for nationwide access to consumers to donate food. To ensure that the projects can continue to make available the food that they source, partnerships are particularly important ways of accessing funding and other in kind support. Again, however, the nature of these can be shaped by the partner organisations, with knock-on effects in terms of how the providers work and cannot necessarily be guaranteed into the future.

Such a conclusion does, however, point to a wider issue of the relationship between the sustainability of emergency food organisations and the sustainability of the wider food system that they are part of. This raises particular questions, beyond the scope of this research but which could be pursued elsewhere, as to whether these emergency food organisations increase the sustainability of this wider food system through the role they play or represent responses to that system’s increasing unsustainability. They could, of course, in part represent both of these simultaneously but when emergency food organisations are carrying increasing amounts of responsibility (as discussed in Chapter 6 and 7) for helping people in food

poverty and avoiding waste it becomes even more important that focus is also shifted on to the dynamics and nature of the wider food system.

The third conclusion of this chapter is that even when food is made available through these systems, access to it is not necessarily sustainable.

Accessibility is not guaranteed to those who may be in need; it is constrained by both logistics and project processes and is unprotected for those who do gain access. Eligibility criteria, referral processes and issues of physical accessibility can all limit people's agency in being able to access emergency provision when they need to. But once there, the lack of rights recipients are afforded and absence of accountability means that their agency once within these systems is also limited.

Therefore both emergency food systems themselves and access to them could be said to be unsustainable on the basis of the analysis of agency presented in this chapter. Agency is highly curtailed by the systems in which it operates, with significant consequences for how this provision can be viewed in right to food terms. The lack of rights afforded to recipients and the level of vulnerability in these systems to not being able to source 'enough' food means that these systems are extremely problematic when considered as a way of fulfilling the right to food when food poverty occurs. This leads on to the key questions discussed in the next empirical section of the thesis, driven by the question of responsibility: who, then, *should* be involved in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the right to food?

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**Empirical Part 2:**  
**Respecting, Protecting and Fulfilling the Right to Food**

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## Chapter 6

### Emergency food provision within a critical ethic of care

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As the first chapter in the empirical part of the thesis on respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human right to food this chapter explores the role of emergency food charity in practice in its current form. The premise of the chapter is that having explored the nature of and ways of working within these organisations (Chapters 4 and 5) and given in the absence of evaluative data, we need to know more about the aims and perceived achievements of emergency food providers (from their own perspectives) in order to come to a better understanding of how they in practice now and in theory in the future may fit within the context of protecting, respecting and fulfilling the right to food.

The chapter does this by exploring two particular elements. In the first instance it explores the notion of need for emergency food provision in order to better understand this provision in relation to the *problem* of food poverty. It asks what is 'need' for this provision and, importantly, how does it relate to the experience of food poverty (as conceptualised in this thesis)? It also explores the notion of success in emergency food provision in order to come to a better understanding of how this provision might fit within the context of right to food *solutions*. It asks, what difference do these projects think they are making (in terms of success) and how does this relate to the right to food framework presented in the thesis?

The chapter also explores a more normative question about what the role of charity should be in responding to the problem of food poverty and realising the human right to food. This section draws on the notion of responsibility to explore these issues. The ways in which these providers are – in practice – assuming responsibility for protecting against hunger is discussed and evidence presented but the question is also raised about what role these charities should be playing. These questions set the scene for detailed

discussion of the role of charity versus the state in the following chapter (Chapter 7) on emergency food provision and the welfare state.

The chapter employs care ethics as a theoretical lens to guide the analysis of these questions. There is a rich literature exploring care and ethics and this chapter draws on this framework in a particular way, adopting the term 'care ethics' to refer to 'a critical ethic of care and responsibility' (Lawson 2007, p.2). Seeing care 'as a form ethics' (Popke 2006, p.506), the concept is drawn on in a way that frames an understanding of care as social. As Williams (2001, p.478) described care can provide a 'lens through which to make situated judgements about collective commitments and individual responsibilities'. Whilst relational understandings of care and notions of interdependency are inherently embedded within such an interpretation of 'care', this broader interpretation allows for the possibility of examining care as something more, 'something which is being detached from broader, inclusive notions of the social through its commodification' (Green and Lawson 2011, p.639).

Care ethics was chosen as the theoretical lens for this analysis for several key reasons. In the first instance its emphasis on structure – on the importance of structural level caring and structural determinants of need for care – fits with the conceptualisations and definitions of food poverty (structurally determined) and the right to food (realised through structural shifts and actors at all scales working together) engaged with in this thesis. Secondly, and particularly importantly for this part of the thesis (this chapter and Chapter 7), the more recent care literature (Williams 2001; Lawson 2007) highlights the importance of neo-liberal influences on how care is defined and put into practice (as increasingly privatised, individualised and marginalised). Thirdly, as we will see here and was alluded to earlier (Chapter 4), the notion of caring is, in itself, important to the way in which emergency food providers understand what they do – the gesture and act of caring for those in need is at the forefront of their motivation.

Just as importantly, and particularly useful for developing an analytical framework, is the way in which care ethics takes account of the complexities

involved in and different scales at which need is defined and care is given. This is embedded within the idea that ‘embodied caring practices must be analysed as multi-sited [...] and as multi-scalar’ (Lawson 2007, p6). This approach enables emphasis to be usefully placed on the interactions between and within different scales (such as inter-personal, local, structural and long and short term) and sites (in the home, in the community, globally) many of which are present in or intersect with emergency food systems. As the chapter progresses the ways in which this multi-sited care analysis facilitates an exploration of the complexities and tensions which exist within and between the many sites embodied by emergency food provision are revealed.

For the purpose of this chapter, care ethics are used as a lens in two key ways in the analysis that follows. In the first instance care is seen as a practice which occurs at many different sites. Emergency food provision is explored as a practical response to food poverty embodied as a caring practice. This analysis allows us to appreciate how need, success and responsibility are all multi-sited; and how ultimately emergency food provision is situated at only one or very few of these many sites that drive need, contribute to its relief or resolution and at which responsibility is held. On the other hand, it provides the opportunity to explore the idea of responsibility in relation to the notion of care as social (not privatised or individualised) and to relate this to the right to food approach.

### **Need for emergency food**

In the absence of systematic research and evaluation on the role and impact of emergency food providers and in order to come to a better idea of how this provision fits in relation to the experience of food poverty, it becomes important to know more about what these organisations set out to achieve. A key factor within this is exploring who they aim to help – defined as in need of their provision. In turn, the way in which these projects define success (the subject of the next section) has the potential to enlighten the role that these initiatives have both as a response to food poverty but most importantly in



the realisation of the human right to food. This evidence is important for gaining a better understanding of how these organisations fit in practice and in theory within responses to the food poverty 'problem' and the right to food 'solution'. In the absence of systematic research, political reaction and local policy response is premised on impressions of what these organisations do, based on the public information which is available. What this analysis enables is a much more critical exploration of exactly who these projects set out to help and how, which could in turn inform much more evidenced responses and expose those which are misinformed.

In terms of need for emergency food provision, the data collected provides evidence on both the organisational conceptualisation of need for emergency food, and the procedures which have established the practices of determining need. The findings illustrate that conceptualisations of need rely heavily on notions of crisis and immediacy, and in both organisations there are practical applications of procedures which are designed to independently establish that need.

The data from both case study organisations highlighted that 'need' for emergency food provision is determined by external individuals or organisations. In the case of FareShare, their relationship is with the emergency food project itself rather than the individual recipients of the food and so need is ultimately determined by those running the CFMs. The CEO of FareShare talked about their business model being based on the notion that the charities they were supporting with surplus food have arisen in response to local need; so, the existence of such a project is taken as a proxy for need. FareShare 'support[s] any organisation that is providing food as part of a safety net for people who are vulnerable' (FareShare CEO).

For the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network the role of referers is central to the model's approach to determining need. In order to obtain a food parcel a voucher is required which can be obtained from front-line professionals in the local community. It is therefore these professionals, who are working with individuals (such as Sure Start Centres helping with Early Years support or Citizens Advice Bureau helping with debt/benefit support) that determine if

someone is in need of an emergency food parcel. The principle behind this system is that the professional will know something of the person's circumstance and will be helping them through their problems and circumstances (such as debt or access to benefits).

In both cases therefore, the organisations procedurally distance themselves from the decision of determining need. In the case of Trussell Trust foodbanks for example this distance appears to be important in the way it both protects project managers from the responsibility of determining the need of people whose circumstances they do not know on the one hand; and on the other, provides independent verification by someone who is familiar with a recipient's circumstances.

The thresholds for determining the 'needy' are however conceptualised by both organisations through notions of crisis and immediacy. For the Trussell Trust, the explicit reference is made to provision for 'people in a short-term crisis' (Foodbank Network Manager). However, in practice it is unclear from the data how straightforward this threshold is, particularly in the changing economic context and participants were aware of the complexity simultaneously embodied within and belied by discourses of crisis:

'Yes, we deal with immediate crises and so, yes, that is a basic premise of the Foodbanks, but those crises arise as a consequence of a number of other factors. [...] One of the growing ones is low income. That is not in isolation from the cost of living, the cost of fuel going up and wages being static.'

Trussell Trust Wales RDO

For the Trussell Trust, this conceptualisation of need is also tied up with a particular faith-motivation around 'feeding the hungry' as outlined in religious verse, for example Matthew Chapter 25:

"I was hungry and you fed me, thirsty and you gave me a drink; I was a stranger and you received me in your homes, naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you took care of me, in prison and you visited me'. The righteous will then answer him, 'When, Lord, did we ever see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you a drink? When did we ever see you a stranger and welcome you in our homes, or naked and clothe you? When did we ever see you sick or in prison visit you?' The King will reply, 'I tell you, whenever you did this for one

of the least important of these members of my family, you did it for me'. (Matthew Ch25 V35-40, The Bible Societies, 1994, p.38)

This faith-motivation to meet need was also articulated by one interviewee (a trustee of a FareShare depot and involved in a city-wide initiative to co-ordinate emergency provision):

'If I bring the faith element into it, you know, when I read my new testament I read of a Jesus who, when approached by someone in need you know didn't say, 'well, that's all very well but let's talk about the longer term issues here', you know, he met their need and in so doing he was then in a position to share something about life changing issues and you know life changing issues for individuals who are coming out of poverty can fundamentally be about you know the poverty bit, but there's also a sense in which there's some more transformational stuff that can happen and this isn't about proselytising, don't get me wrong, far from it, but from a faith perspective the more important thing is about recognising that people have need, being compassionate, getting alongside them and meeting their need with no real agenda other than to do that and if in the process of doing that you're sharing God's heart of love for a needy individual, family or community then great.'

FareShare National Trustee and Trustee of FareShare South West

There is something inherently practical in this faith-based driver articulated here, embodied of course in the very fact that such passages are seen to motivate social action. The way this interviewee talks about 'meeting need' in a practical way, of the importance of compassion as a gesture and experience, could all play a role in this conceptualisation of need and the meeting of it in an immediate, relational sense.

For FareShare on the other hand need is referred to as 'vulnerability'. As the earlier quote from the CEO demonstrated, food is distributed to projects working with 'people who are vulnerable'. The projects visited for this research (homeless accommodation, homeless day centre, homeless meal project and refugee rights centre) all helped people who were particularly 'vulnerable'; so whilst the notion of vulnerability may be conceptualised broadly, to cover community cafes in deprived areas or lunch clubs for the elderly, where the provision is an 'emergency' the populations helped are especially vulnerable and often going through an acute crisis – for example lack of housing, lack of citizenship status.

These data and previous research (Lambie 2011) do, however, raise questions as to how far this notion of crisis is driven by project capacity and sustainability. As has been noted already and will be explored further in this chapter, these charities are highly professionalised; embedded within this professionalised and formalised approach is the notion of sustainability of the charitable models and protecting this into the future. Some foodbank managers made explicit reference to crisis being a 'doable concept' (Burngreave Foodbank Manager) or that they were not resourced for 'long term food provision' (North Cotswold Foodbank). The notion of (avoiding) dependency is also invoked, with the crisis conceptualisation being a way of protecting this, but it is not necessarily clear if or how this links to sustainability:

'I think it's about crisis because I think, if you look at Lawrence Weston [an area of Bristol], most people are close to the breadline most of the time and we can't possibly solve that with a food bank because we'd make people dependent on something'

North West Bristol Foodbank Manager

The 'three voucher' policy at foodbanks – where someone can be given up to three vouchers in the first instance and can only get a fourth when special arrangements are made between the referrer and foodbank manager – reinforces the fact that this is short term-immediate help, not long term support. This has previously found to be tied up in important ways with project sustainability (Lambie 2011). However, these data, in support of this earlier research work found that this 'three voucher rule' was not always adhered to and projects will support people on longer term basis. The existence of this cut off process does nonetheless provide projects with a system to fall back on if they were struggling with capacity.

From the findings presented here it appears that two things could be driving the conceptualisation of need as crises and immediate need. Organisational ethics to help the hungry and the vulnerability framing could be determining the conceptualisation of need as urgent and immediate. On the other hand, project capacity and sustainability leading to a focus on what is achievable

by the projects and in which context it makes sense to draw a line around this idea of immediacy.

However, the findings also reveal that whilst conceptualisations of need for emergency food provision are seemingly bounded in terms of crisis or more extreme neediness, these conceptualisations are in fact located within projects' sensitivities of the drivers of this need and the complex underpinning experiences of poverty and low income. At this point, the care ethics approach to multi-sited and multi-scalar analyses is particularly important as a way of understanding and taking account of the wider aspects on which these conceptualisations are situated.

Significantly, interviewees' definition of need as 'crisis' were discussed in interviews as part of a larger set of questions on the concept of food poverty. These data revealed an awareness amongst participants of the relationship between the crises they were seeing in their projects and their recipients' wider circumstances of poverty. Interviewees talked about the need for addressing underlying causes of poverty. This very much fits alongside previous research which highlights projects' own awareness of the limitations of emergency food provision as relief for the symptoms of food poverty (Lambie-Mumford 2013A).

The Executive Chairman of the Trussell Trust also spoke in terms of precariousness and resilience. This provides a potential platform for situating the conceptualisation of need for emergency food as 'crisis' within the context of wider experiences of food poverty.

'Because we are dealing with people whose [...] elasticity is very, very limited, so you just move it £10 either way and people are in deep trouble.'

'They don't have any resilience, they don't have any savings'

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman

The importance of situating 'food crises' within the context of wider lived experiences was also highlighted by the data from the small number of recipients interviewed: one was assessed fit for work and his benefit payments were not enough; another was roofless; and the third was living in

a sheltered housing scheme having fled domestic violence. These findings show the complex underpinning circumstances of emergency food recipients and highlight the importance of looking beyond a food 'crisis', towards the underpinning drivers of that need.

These data demonstrate awareness by providers of the ways in which such crises embody wider experiences of poverty, precariousness and a lack of resilience, and complex underpinning household and income circumstances. Given these findings it is possible to argue that projects actually see their definition of need as crisis within a wider context of vulnerability to these crises, informed by experiences of poverty. They therefore see need for their provision as part of (indeed one site within) the food poverty experience which would also incorporate mild and moderate experiences and sites of food poverty. These findings therefore show that conceptualisations of need for emergency food provision are actually much more subtle than they would appear when talked about in terms of language such as 'crisis'.

However, the fact that the predominant language of crisis belies this subtlety could prove challenging to the progressive realisation of the human right to food in the future, should this language continue and these projects become the primary sources of support for people experiencing or vulnerable to hunger. There is a danger of this more restrictive framing rendering the underpinning drivers of this perception of need invisible. Tarasuk (2001) previously cautioned about the impact of food banks in framing these issues as a 'food [lack]' problem, which is best 'addressed by giving food'. Tarasuk and Eakin (2005, p.184) also observed in Canada a disassociation between client need and food giving rendering problems of unmet need invisible, providing little impetus for community groups or governments to find other solutions. So, whilst projects' understanding of the need they are seeing may be more subtle and likened to a broader food poverty conceptualisation, the ways in which need is understood in the wider discourse (as immediate and acute) could play its own role in how these projects are responded to, with emphasis placed on supporting charitable provision of food, rather than on the underpinning drivers of the need which is presented.

## **Success of emergency food projects**

Whilst helping people in crisis necessarily ties up with meeting immediate need, the successes and role of these caring practices were also revealed by the data to be more complex and subtle. Previous research tells us that from food security perspectives, emergency food projects have limited impact beyond the provision of food, that where they are appropriate and tailored to the needs of recipients they may help relieve symptoms of hunger (as reviewed in Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). However, whilst food provision could be seen to principally relieve symptoms and meet immediate need (defined as crisis), these data revealed subtleties in the aspects of projects' perceived success and the role identified for this meeting of immediate need from interviewees.

The multi-sited and multi-scalar approach of the care ethics analysis became immediately helpful in interpreting this data. Its value in terms of exploring the processes of caring through these systems is also apparent, although it is not the focus of the chapter, given that they involve food donors, referral agencies, volunteers, franchise projects, head offices and external partners and are therefore inherently multi-sited. The analysis of notions of successful caring offered here shows how these projects are, in practice, multi-sited in the ways they care (as inter-personal exchanges of care, as projects providing safe spaces, and as part of a wider welfare network) and situated at one of many scales on which care for people in food poverty and poverty occurs.

In the first instance, the data revealed a sense that caring was an end in itself and formed an important part of the success of emergency food provision. Foodbank provision was seen as giving people hope, for example through being blessed with the provision and help received at a foodbank but also knowing that the assistance was there in the future. This suggests that there is an inter-personal site of caring within this provision and that the relational experience of the gesture of care is significant in and of itself and value inherent within it.

The way in which all kinds of emergency food projects (foodbanks and FareShare CFMs) were seen as providing places of safety came out strongly from the data as well and providing recipients with a safe and supported place was seen as key. Emergency food projects were also seen as important social spaces; with foodbanks offering spaces for recipients to talk to volunteers if they wish and for fareshare CFMs working with particular groups (such as the homeless or asylum seeking communities) the projects were seen to provide safe social opportunities.

‘...it gives you a bit of hope, you know, that at least you’ve got somewhere, or you’ve got some people who can care a bit for you.’

Archer Project, Client 2

Importantly, the provision of food in response to crisis and in order to meet immediate need was also seen by some interviewees as forming a ‘gateway’ to other support. People access these projects (foodbank or CFM) to obtain help with food but opportunities then arise for projects to work directly with people and/or signpost them on for help with other issues that they may be facing and may relate to their need for emergency food.

Beyond the provision of food parcels and social interaction, these emergency food projects were seen to have a wider role in terms of other direct support on offer (particularly FareShare CFMs such as homeless day centres) and/or be procedurally and metaphorically situated within a wider network of support (through the relationship between foodbanks and referral agencies and foodbank signposting processes). For some FareShare CFMs, who are not food banks, providing food is only one aspect of the work they do. Projects visited for this research included a homeless day centre (providing health services, training and facilities to vulnerably housed people in the city), a housing project (with a supported work scheme) and refugee rights project (which provided advice, computer training and other support). In such examples, food is just one of many different dimensions to projects’ work and is contextualised within access to other forms of support.

Whilst this is not the case for foodbanks, the data did highlight that even these projects do not work in isolation but instead are situated within the



context of wider support. There appear to be two key mechanisms for this. The first is the relationship between the foodbank and the referrer, with the premise of the foodbank voucher being that it is issued whilst the referrer helps overcome the 'crisis'. The three voucher rule provides foodbanks with a tool for going back to referrers to check on the progress of this support. Secondly, signposting provides foodbanks with a tool of moving people on to other services in the local community who may be able to help them with other aspects of support which may be identified during a recipients' visit. This signposting procedure has the potential to embed foodbanks within wider local support systems and not be isolated sites of support.

Findings around the importance of projects providing safe spaces, and working as active parts of a wider welfare network suggest that caring within the context of emergency food provision, in addition to the inter-personal site, also operates at project and wider welfare network sites. In turn, however, this wider support and notion of connecting recipients to other parts of the welfare network also helps us to understand where these projects fit in scales of caring. It helps to highlight that this particular form of multi-sited caring sits at one specific scale among many at which people in poverty and food poverty receive care – from the household, social networks, the locality, and national government.

These findings suggest that emergency food projects may in fact play a more complex role than may first be apparent. Whilst food security outcomes from the food on offer and the mechanisms for obtaining it may be limited, emergency food providers may be playing a more important social role as spaces of care and facilitators of social support and welfare networks. This fits with the right to food approach which frames this thesis and is driven not just by the impetus to solve the problem of food poverty but by the recognition that more is required, that more issues and actors are involved and there are wider drivers of poverty at work.

The findings presented above in relation to notions of need for and success of emergency food provision show that those involved see the wider complexities of food poverty, beyond the notion of crisis and recognise the

need for and role of wider solutions. The multi-sited analysis of care which has been used here enables this to be articulated and provides the opportunity to situate these interpretations within the wider, complex contexts of drivers of need and wider solutions in which they fit.

We can therefore see how definitions of need and success are both situated at one or very few sites of the experience of food poverty and responses to it. Food poverty and acute food crises represent a set of lived experiences and structural determinants that can interact with a range of support services. Importantly, those involved in this provision appear to be aware of these subtleties and complexities. The data suggests that those involved in these projects are conscious of the broader picture of vulnerability and, in fact, consciously (in theory and practice) situate their provision within and as part of a wider network of support. Similarly, whilst the conceptualisation of need sets a distinction around the notion of a food crisis, deliberately set apart from wider experiences of (lesser) food poverty, the ways in which the impact of emergency food provision is set out by those involved in its provision (working at the individual, project and wider welfare levels) indicate that those involved in emergency food provision do, in fact, approach their work as part of a bigger picture of food poverty and poverty.

### **Responsibility for care**

Care ethics frames care as public and therefore pushes back against neo-liberal processes of the privatisation of care (Lawson 2007). As Lawson (2007, 5) outlines:

‘Care ethics foregrounds the centrality and public character of care activities and so reframes responsibility. This reframing involves challenging neoliberal market logics that intensify the marginalization of care by expressing (seemingly) everything in terms of personal responsibility or competition between communities.’

This is particularly important in this thesis which also explores in the chapter that follows (Chapter 7) the role of neo-liberal shifts in the welfare state in the growth of emergency food provision. Care ethics therefore allows us to

explore dynamics of this privatisation of care (in the form of support for food poverty moving into the charitable sector) within the context of a social ethic which sees care as structural and public. The notion of responsibility – who is responsible for care – underpins this approach and forms the driving question of this part of the chapter.

When we look at this question – of who is responsible for caring for those experiencing food poverty and for working towards the right to food – two elements become particularly important. The first is that of who is caring *in practice* and the second is a normative question of who *should* care and how. This part of the chapter first of all explores how emergency food charities are assuming the responsibility for alleviating experiences of food poverty in practice and how they are doing so in particularly streamlined and professionalised ways. The second part of the section then explores the structural interpretation of care and highlights how complexity is actually embedded; that whilst responsibility should lie with the state and other structural-level actors, in fact emergency food providers do try, in various ways, to navigate the scales between individual need and structural determinants.

In terms of who is taking responsibility for caring for those in food poverty in practice, the data appears to suggest that emergency food providers are responsively assuming this responsibility to care, as need grows and the welfare state retrenches. Interviewees talked about organisational growth as a response to demand (either for food banks or the availability of surplus for redistribution). However, how providers feel about assuming this responsibility is not clear cut. The question of there being an opportunity in terms of a renewed role for the church in social action appears to be supported to some extent by the data, which highlight how food banks provide churches interested in social action with achievable projects. Some participants suggested that there was an awakening in terms of the importance of social action within the church over recent years and food banks can provide a sense of purpose when before they did not know what social action to get involved with. Having said this, the data overall are not clear on how providers generally feel about assuming this responsibility.

Whilst some interviewees saw the pulling back of the welfare state and the 'stepping up' of the church into this type of provision as an opportunity for the church, others did not and instead saw it regretfully as a 'duty' of the church.

Whilst those involved in the provision may be conflicted about the perceived necessity of emergency food organisations taking this responsibility, they are doing so in practice regardless, and in particular ways. Notably, both organisations are streamlined and have developed a range of professionalised processes in order to respond to perceived need and assume responsibility in practice.

The Trussell Trust operate a not-for-profit franchise model with franchisees paying an upfront franchise fee and then required to work in particular ways and be audited annually; in return they can use Trussell Trust branding and get training and on-going support from regional and national level staff. FareShare operates a similar model with depots being encouraged to be independently viable social enterprises which have to comply with food safety regulations and benefit from branding, training and, crucially, connections to food supplies which are facilitated nationally.

Whilst interviewees talked about organisational growth as a response to demand (either for food banks or the availability of surplus for redistribution) in both cases how this growth was realised in practice was approached strategically. The Trussell Trust are considering logistical elements to facilitate their continued expansion with the possibility for hubs where food is stored and from which individual foodbanks draw down supplies. For FareShare growth was sought through a process of building organisational reputation so that the food industry would feel confident in working with them.

The data revealed strategic visions for either a foodbank in every town/community or to have a FareShare depot servicing every part of the United Kingdom. Furthermore it was suggested that the two organisations, working together as the two biggest food charities in the country could 'create a nation where no one need go hungry.' (Trussell Trust Executive Chairman). The growth of these organisations and this planned future trajectory was spoken of as a response to need but one strategic interviewee

did highlight how some of the need for this provision could be overcome and was unnecessary (i.e. through resolving administrative mistakes and slow benefits systems).

The nature of these charities as highly professionalised, streamlined organisations could be seen as a result of one particular aspect of the market logic that Lawson 2007, p5) identified, namely welfare diversification (see Lambie-Mumford 2013A also). An agenda pursued by New Labour governments (1997-2010) as part of the so called 'Third Way' and now wrapped up in the Conservative-led coalition government as part of the 'Big Society' agenda, this diversification have involved the increasing involvement of the third sector in welfare provision and a resulting professionalisation in the system as it has to compete in the sector (Alcock 2010).

It could be argued, then, that these national emergency food organisations are charities of their time; a product of the changing landscape of the third sector over the last seventeen years. Importantly, however, and as will be explored further in the Chapter (7) that follows, these charities are not taking on delivery contracts to form part of the formalised welfare system, but rather they are working in a vacuum left by the formalised provision. It could be possible to argue, then, that this is a new dynamic but a bi-product of this diversification nonetheless.

Whilst we have always had food assistance, this provision is on a new scale and more formalised than before and appears to represent a privatisation of care for the hungry, in terms of a shift from state-based responses to charity. Importantly, it is also occurring in the context of increasingly prominent discourses of personal responsibility for poverty as well as welfare retrenchment.

These increasingly streamlined charities with national profiles are therefore seemingly taking responsibility for hunger where the state is not, for something the state is increasingly branding a problem of personal responsibility. It appears to be moving the discursive and practical work of helping people with acute experiences of food insecurity into the charitable sector.

In terms of the question of who should care for those in food poverty, this privatisation of care is counter to care ethics approaches which advocate structural responses to caring and the public nature of care. The ways Lawson (2007) argued that care ethics can be used to understand care on a structural and long-term level and for the central and public nature of care activities (p.5) finds affinity with the right to food approach's inherently structural interpretation of responsibility for preventing and protecting against hunger. Therefore, this assuming of responsibility by charitable (private) initiatives is in tension with a care ethics approach which advocates the public and central nature of caring over privatised approaches.

However, once again complexity surrounds this analysis. The way in which the Trussell Trust in particular is negotiating the space between their experiences in local communities and wider structures that are determining the need they are seeing suggests that once again, multi-sited and multi-structural approaches to analysis might be helpful, to explore how privatised responses could speak into structural responses called for by care ethics and the right to food. In particular the findings suggest that foodbanks and those associated with them have at their disposal two key mechanisms for negotiating the increasingly contested space between the demand seen in local communities and the policies and processes which are determining it: active political engagement, through advocacy, publication of data and speaking into systems; and the power and influence of the collective voice of the church.

The data from strategic Trussell Trust interviewees indicates that there are several important aspects to political engagement from their perspective. In the first instance as the network has gotten bigger the Trust has increasingly become a 'voice for the voiceless' which has also involved working to change perceptions by providing information on who is 'going hungry'. Whilst their primary focus remains on the social action of providing food parcels as opposed to campaigning this aspect of their work has become increasingly important, with some in the trust identifying it as the Trust's responsibility to make their information available and the voices of the people they help, heard. In the second instance the Trust works to bring attention to the issues

that their foodbanks identify for example problems with local social fund arrangements, problems with Job Centres not issuing short term benefit advances and unfair sanctioning. However, a clear tension for the Trust lies in their approach to remaining a-political and strategic interviewees talked at length about the ways in which their interjections related to processes and procedures and the implementation of policies rather than the policies themselves.

‘The ideal scenario is that we become a voice for those people. That is what we would want to do. The difficulty is that the Trussell Trust is and wants to remain apolitical. We want to stay out of the political sphere and not take one side or the other.’

Trussell Trust Operations Director

This a-political stance is clearly problematic and likely to get more difficult in the context of a General Election in 2015 given the politicised nature of food poverty and food banks.

Beyond social action, however, other church voices are joining the wider debate, playing a considerable role in navigating this space between the work of food banks on the ground and the social security (welfare) system. The work of particular Christian NGOs, notably Church Action on Poverty is particularly important here (Cooper and Dumpleton 2013; End Hunger Fast no date) and recently several Christian Bishops wrote a letter to a national newspaper calling for political attention to the issue of rising demand for food banks and the connections to ‘cutbacks to and failures in the benefits system’ (Daily Mirror 2014).

So, whilst emergency food provision may pose a significant challenge to structural interpretations of care, this research indicates that this is not necessarily a simple assertion to make. Projects are actively navigating between their ‘privatised’ and ‘marginalised’ work and speaking into the wider structures determining the experience of food poverty.

## **Conclusion**

The findings presented in this chapter highlight the complexity involved in understanding the need for and success of emergency food provision as well as interpreting where responsibilities lie for preventing and protecting against hunger. The analysis shows that multi-sited approaches can help us come to a better understanding of how these projects fit within the lived experience of food poverty (incorporating mild and moderate scales) and the wider set of responses and welfare networks which could be said to help overcome it in a right to food context (not just food, welfare rights, debt advice and so on).

It appears from this chapter that multi-sited analyses of caring practices could usefully inform future research on and structural responses to emergency food provision. They could do this by providing an analytical tool for taking into account the underpinning drivers of 'crisis' needs, the different levels at which emergency projects impact on those they help as well as the relationship between emergency food projects and wider welfare structures.

Importantly the findings presented here highlight how 'need', 'success' and 'responsibility' in relation to food poverty and the right to food are all multi-sited. Both in and of themselves and specifically in terms of how emergency food provision and the right to food fits onto them. Furthermore, through a multi-sited analysis it becomes clear that emergency food provision can be seen as situated on one or very few of many different sites of need (relating to the wider experience of food poverty), successful care (for the poor in the context of welfare systems) and responsibility (for caring and realising the right to food).

The first conclusion of this chapter is that need for emergency food provision – as presented by the interview respondents – can be situated as a crisis point within the context of the wider experience of food poverty, in a way that takes account of not only scales of vulnerability and experience (mild, moderate or acute) but also the different sites which form the determinants of this experience. The notion of crisis need which is often presented can therefore more effectively be placed on a wider context of structural determinants of food poverty, financial insecurity and lesser but by no means less real experiences of food poverty.



The second conclusion of this chapter is that whilst emergency food provision is often talked about in terms of its limited impact on improving food security (providing relief from symptoms of hunger) the question of 'success' could be situated within the context of the range of sites and levels at which support for food poverty and poverty occur. In practice, caring by these projects appears to operate at numerous sites including at the individual (through the act of caring) and project (in terms of other services on offer) level as well as in the context of the wider social support network (through signposting and referrals). Not only can the impact of these projects be situated at multiple sites but the analysis presented here has also shown how the nature of these initiatives can itself be situated at one site or level within the context of many where support operates.

In terms of responsibility, a third conclusion of this chapter is that emergency food organisations are assuming responsibility for caring for those in acute food poverty where the state is not. However, the findings also show the particular ways in which these organisations appear to be navigating the contested space between individual need and the structural determinants of that need – through campaigning and collective voice. In these ways it appears that there may be opportunities for these organisations to hold others to account in the pursuit of the realisation of the human right to food.

Finally, care ethics provides an important tool which will be particularly important as the thesis moves onto the next chapter (Chapter 7) for exploring the relationship between emergency food provision and the welfare state. Care ethics highlight the importance of social and structural caring – that care should not be relinquished by society in favour of ad hoc, marginalised charitable responses in the context of prevailing rhetoric about 'deserving' and 'undeserving' people and increasingly personalised interpretations of poverty.

## Chapter 7

### Emergency food provision and the changing welfare state

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The focus of this chapter is on the role of the state in respecting, protecting and fulfilling the human right to food. Building on the work in the previous chapter (Chapter 6) on the role of charities, the role of the state is explored through the lens of social protection, specifically the ways in which state provided social protection through a welfare state impacts on issues of food poverty and interacts with the rise of emergency food provision. The particular focus of this chapter is on the relationship between the changing welfare state in the UK and the rise of emergency food provision in the form of food banks.

Social protection can be provided through civil society or state-based organisations and emergency food provision could be seen to represent an example of civil society-based protection. However, whilst De Schutter (2013, 4) highlights the importance of informal, community based social protection, from a right to food perspective the state is seen as the ultimate duty-bearer for ensuring the right is protected, respected and fulfilled for all. Within a right to food context, universality, rights and entitlements are also important particularly in relation to the fulfilment of the right to food when people are unable to access food for themselves. Food charity then, in so far as it is neither universal nor an entitlement, poses a challenge to the right to food approach. This chapter explores the relationship between the formal welfare state in the UK and the rise of emergency food provision and looks in particular at how changes to the welfare state are impacting on both the need for and shape of this ad hoc charitable provision.

State-managed social protection has many forms and would include pensions and labour market policy as well as parts of healthcare. But for the purposes of this chapter the focus is specifically on those aspects of the welfare state which protect people from poverty – namely social security and services providing assistance to those in poverty or out of work. It is the

relationship between these parts of the welfare state and the rise of emergency food provision as civil society-based social protection which is the focus of the chapter. This is a particularly important site for investigation given the experiences of this relationship in other country contexts. In both the USA and Canada the numbers of emergency food projects and people turning to them for help grew in the context of economic recession and reforms to social security which saw reductions in entitlements and a broader programme of welfare retrenchment (see Riches 2002; Poppendieck 1998).

The concept and definition of “the welfare state” has been the subject of many debates and discussions in academic literature and Veit-Wilson (2000: 11) summarises the defining characteristics as ‘policies to prevent poverty arising for anyone as well as those providing relief for such poverty as occurs’. Such a characterisation highlights the importance of the lens of responsibility to any study of a welfare state, that is, the responsibility a state claims for the prevention of and protection against poverty. It also highlights the importance of distinguishing between social security (as a policy providing relief) and wider policies which may incorporate a broader range of actors in preventing poverty occurring (for example by increasing labour market demand and minimum pay and benefit rates to adequate levels).

For the purposes of this chapter, when looking at welfare reform emphasis is placed upon policies to reform social security entitlements (in terms of reductions and/or conditionality) on the need for and shape of food banking in the UK, with the key reforms and policies outlined in the following section. It is important to distinguish this from the other side of recent cuts which have seen reductions in finance to public services that also make up significant elements of the welfare state. The impact of these cuts to services is discussed in previous writing in Lambie (2011) and Lambie-Mumford (2013A) in relation to how cuts in budgets within services such as social services and probation services was leading to professionals giving out foodbank vouchers, where before they had discretionary budgets or other forms of support to help people through a crisis period. The emphasis on the notion of responsibility also raises a particularly important set of questions relating to what responsibility the state is assuming and will assume in the future, in the

context of these reforms. It could be argued that key shifts in responsibility are embedded within the simultaneous proliferation and reliance on food charity and stringent and wide ranging cuts to social security and services.

As we have seen, the growth in numbers visiting Trussell Trust foodbanks rose particularly sharply between the years 2012-2013 and 2013-2014 but overall, significantly since 2010 (when there were 20 foodbanks open). This growth has therefore occurred at the same time as the Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government have initiated an extensive programme of reform to welfare policy in the UK, including to housing benefit, council tax benefit, child benefits and tax credits (Taylor-Gooby and Stoker 2011; Beatty and Fothergill 2013). April 2013 saw the introduction of a raft of these changes including capping levels of income assistance which can be claimed through housing benefit and a reduction in the annual up-rating of most working age benefits. The role that welfare reform in particular is playing in demand for food assistance is a high profile question in social policy commentary currently (Butler 2014; Daily Record 2014). Being seen as two sides of the ideological approaches to welfare – on the one hand celebrated as a communitarian response in the context of individualised risk; and on the other as a symbol of the failure of the welfare system (Gregory 2014; Hanson 2013). Parliamentarians and NGOs (Church Action on Poverty, CPAG and Oxfam) are both engaged with this question and the recently launched Parliamentary inquiry into hunger and food poverty in Britain will explore the issue (Field 2014; Perry forthcoming).

The wide-ranging reforms fit within the context of a recent era of welfare austerity in the UK which arose out of the economic crash of the mid-2000s and the recession which followed. They also fit onto a wider historical trajectory of shifts in the shape and nature of the welfare state since the 1970s and particularly since the beginning of the New Labour years in 1997 which saw the increased and more formalised role of the voluntary sector in welfare services through programmes of diversification and a consequently more formalised and professionalised voluntary sector generally.

Since the economic crash we have seen a programme of extensive cuts to services which form part of the welfare state and widespread reforms to social security; what some have termed an 'age of welfare austerity' (Farnsworth 2011, p251). This welfare austerity is discussed in a very specific way as inevitable cuts in public spending. The Conservative Party-led coalition government on their election in 2010 prescribed austerity as being the inevitable way forward on the grounds of 'unaffordability' (Kirkup 2013; Blackburn 2013). Yet, whilst austerity is framed as inevitable by politicians (Farnsworth and Irving 2011b), researchers have shown that this is far from the case. Hay (2005, p198), from a political economy perspective showed how, whilst cuts to welfare spending are increasingly framed as an issue of economic competitiveness and a requirement of globalisation, empirical evidence across Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries shows this not to be the case, with politicians retaining much more autonomy in these shifts 'than they would like to acknowledge'.

This raises questions for how we can examine the ways in which deficit reduction are approached – as political-economic choices which are in fact ideologically driven. For example through welfare austerity what we are seeing, then, in effect is a focus on cutting public spending to overcome government deficit rather than a raising of progressive taxes (Farnsworth 2011). This approach to balancing the budget can actually be seen as inherently ideological, driven by neo-liberal notions of individual responsibility for risk, paternalism and communitarianism. Political rhetoric therefore serves to mask the ideology which drives it, presenting it instead as 'inevitable, unquestionable and un-ideological' (Farnsworth 2011, p259).

Far from inevitable, welfare austerity is therefore better understood as a voluntary political-economic strategy driven by an ideological impetus to drive down the government deficit through spending cuts rather than levying more progressive taxes. Hutton (2010) discussed the voluntary nature of these austerity cuts and compared them to other countries. Importantly for this thesis, Hutton (2010) observed that the planned cuts were 'twice as tough as the famously harsh measures Canada took between 1994 and

1997'. This is of particular significance given the context in which food banks rose in Canada. Setting the UK on a similar path of significant retrenchment raises urgent questions of the consequences of this for the proliferation of food bank and other emergency food provision here in the UK.

The data collected indicate that several reforms in particular are important. This part of the chapter will talk briefly through each: the abolition of the social fund; the introduction of the 'bedroom tax' and changes to council tax benefit; increased length of sanctions; changes to criteria for Employment Support Allowance; and caps to entitlement and uprating levels.

The welfare reform act prescribed the abolition of the discretionary social fund, which covered crisis loans, community care grants and budgeting loans. Importantly for this study, crisis loans and community care grants were replaced by a twofold system:

- 'Payments on account of benefit' from the DWP. These are 'short-term advances' (loans) to benefit claimants in financial need waiting for an initial payment or an increase in their entitlement. Payments on account in the form of 'budgeting advances' will also be available to claimants in receipt of universal credit as a replacement for Social Fund budgeting loans.
- The second is local welfare provision provided by Local Authorities and the devolved administrations.

Simmons 2013

The LGA (2014) have reported that national funding for local welfare assistance schemes has been cut with effect from 2015. This leaves the future of urgent loans and grant schemes extremely uncertain, particularly given the context of significant cuts to local authority funding generally which is being implemented.

Amongst a range of changes which apply to housing benefit, the so called 'bedroom tax' relates to notions of under-occupation (see Beatty and Fothergill 2013). Under the new rules, an example of a 3 bedroom family home which would be ruled as under-occupied would be if: there were two

children of the same sex under the age of 16 living there; if there were two children of different sexes under 10. Whilst severely disabled children are allowed their own room, only if an adult in a couple requires a 'non-resident over-night carer' would they be allowed an additional room (National Housing Federation, no date). Where a home is deemed under-occupied the tenant loses '14% of their Housing benefit for one extra bedroom and 25% for two or more extra bedrooms' (National Housing Federation, No Date). It is estimated that 31% of working age claimants of housing benefit will be affected by this reform (National Housing Federation, No Date). Changes to council tax which took effect in April 2013 have also been introduced which mean that people of working age who are claiming support with their council tax now have to pay at least 23% of their Council Tax (Sheffield City Council no date).

Support for people who are too ill to work (previously referred to as 'incapacity benefit') have been replaced by the Employment Support Allowance (ESA). This entitlement has embedded within it significant conditionality and involves 'more stringent medical tests, greater conditionality and time limiting of non-means tested entitlement for all but the most severely ill or disabled' (Beatty and Fothergill 2013, p5).

There have also been key changes to sanctions for out of work social security payments. In particular, October 2012 saw the introduction of extended lengths for sanctions to Job Seekers Allowance recipients. Under categories of 'higher, intermediate and lower', 'depending on the nature of the offence' (DWP 2014) people are sanctioned for 4 – 156 weeks (for Job Seekers allowance) or 1 – 4 weeks for ESA (DWP 2013).

April 2013 saw the introduction of a cap to the total amount of benefits out-of-work people can receive. No family of working age can now receive more than £500 per week and no single adult can receive more than £350. April 2013 also saw the introduction of a new system of uprating (see CUF 2013 for a guide to this). Prior to April 2011 social security levels went up in line with the Retail Price Index (RPI), but from that point rose instead in line with the (slower to rise) Consumer Price Index (CPI). This uprating policy was

changed again in 2013 to a rise by 1% a year for the following three years. This will mean that incomes will be reduced in real terms over this time as inflation is likely to rise at a higher rate.

Given how recent many of these changes are the cumulative consequences of these changes are difficult to ascertain although evidence is emerging. Annual minimum income standards research shows that out of work benefits now provide even less of the income needed to achieve a minimum standard of living than in 2012 when taking into account the changes and rising cost of living out of work benefits now account for: 38% of the income a single working age adult requires for a minimum socially acceptable standard of living (compared to 40% in 2012); 58% for a couple with two children (down from 60% in 2012); and 57% for a single parent with one child (down from 59%) (Davis et al 2012; Hirsh 2013).

### **Food banks and the welfare state: the relationship**

Given the Coalition government's drive for increasingly localised voluntary sector-driven 'welfare', more broadly conceived, it is helpful to establish where food banks can be seen to fit amongst the mix of state driven policies of poverty prevention and alleviation (the formal welfare state) and wider community-based support. There are several mechanisms by which Trussell Trust foodbanks in particular demarcate the space between their projects and the 'welfare state', in particular by not entering into contractual Service Level Agreements and by maintaining discursive and practical distance through voucher systems and rhetoric. Having said this, there are elements of this demarcation which are problematic, including drawing a line around when they are or are not filling gaps in the welfare state, accepting grant funding (particularly at local level) and close relationships with social security agencies.

The relationship between Trussell Trust foodbanks and the welfare state is discussed by those involved in the organisation as distinct and separate:



‘The Trussell Trust is about not providing another means of benefit. We are not there to take the place of the benefit system. This was set up as a safety net for people who fell through the system. That is all it was ever set up for. More and more, it is becoming a means for people who really are struggling in our community.’

Trussell Trust Operations Director

In order to draw a line around when foodbanks or other projects like them may be said to be part of or separate from the welfare state, one way of identifying this is to look at those organisations that enter into agreements to provide services on behalf of the state (through Service Level Agreements, for example). The Trussell Trust take this distinction particularly seriously, as outlined in their webpage entitled ‘A response to inaccurate and misleading reports about The Trussell Trust’ (Trussell Trust, no dateB):

‘The Trussell Trust has advised our foodbanks against entering into contractual service level agreements with local authorities and do not think foodbanks should become part of state welfare provision. Trussell Trust foodbanks are there for those who slip through the welfare net in order to prevent a crisis turning into disaster, not a replacement for the welfare state.’ (Trussell Trust no dateB)

The distinctiveness of foodbanks from the welfare state is also valued at a local level by those running projects on the ground:

‘I can’t ever envisage us ever being an arm of the social services and I don’t think most of us want it and I certainly don’t and so I wouldn’t consider having sort of a contract with the local authority to deliver local authority services according to their terms and conditions I think that’s a non-starter.’

Burngreave Foodbank Manager

It is beyond the scope of this research to know whether or not all foodbanks have taken this advice and reports of local authority grant funding (which is not the same as funding for contracted services) are not necessarily clear on the terms of this funding (BBC News 2014; Butler 2012). Whilst taking this stance could provide the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network with some tangible – formal – distance from the welfare state, the picture is likely to be more complex when we look at FareShare CFMs. It is likely – but again, beyond the scope of this research – that some of these projects (for example homeless projects, dry houses or adult day centres) may be involved in

contractual service agreements with local or even national governments (for example to provide housing, mental health or addiction services), making the relationship between the emergency food they provide and the formal welfare state more discreet and possibly less clear-cut.

Beyond not entering into contractual agreements with government bodies there are other key ways through which foodbanks in particular distance themselves from the formal welfare state, both in practice and discursively; namely, through the use of referral systems and discursive references to helping those who have fallen through the 'gaps' in the welfare system.

Procedurally, a referral system (Trussell Trust projects use vouchers) provides both a formal link to and distance from the welfare state. Whilst they provide a connection to formal welfare services such as Early Years support (through health visitors) or unemployment support (through job centres) they also enable the decision-making process and ultimate responsibility for the individual's welfare to remain in the state welfare system. Professionals give food bank vouchers while they work to 'solve' a person's problem; recipients are referred from the welfare state but remain within it, through this voucher link (see Lambie 2011). Voucher systems and rhetorical references to helping those who have fallen through safety nets arguably provide mechanisms for food banks to procedurally and discursively distance themselves from the formal mechanisms of the welfare state as well as from the responsibility of deciding who is in need of their provision and who is not (as discussed in Chapter 6) – they therefore do not determine who is eligible for what or retain any responsibility for the solution to individual problems.

However, these lines of distinction (between food banks on the one hand and the welfare state on the other) are increasingly hard to draw and are not unproblematic. For example, whilst it establishes a discursive distance – with food banks below the net, catching what comes through – a question exists in turn for how far food banks may be plugging those gaps and in so doing becoming a more formalised (albeit not necessarily state funded) part of how the welfare state operates as a wider system. Arguably the same question could be raised in relation to the voucher system. Whilst food bank vouchers

are seen as an important addition to the toolkit of professionals within, in some cases, state funded services, (Lambie 2011) how far does this incorporate that provision within those toolkits and thereby become an *in practice* part of what those welfare services provide?

Two further subtleties also remain. As highlighted above, the distinction drawn between contractual funding agreements and one-off grant funding is emphasised in the context of this debate. However, the terms of those grants may be important to explore in terms of the exact nature of what the outputs and outcomes that are being funded are. The BBC have reported that a third of local councils have given funding to food banks in their areas, but the nature of this funding is not necessarily clear (BBC News 2014). At a devolved level, the Scottish government has launched the Emergency Food Fund (EFF) as part of the implementation of welfare reforms. This fund (totalling £500,000) aims to ‘support projects which respond to immediate demands for emergency food aid and help to address the underlying causes of food poverty’. It outlines:

‘Grants will be given to projects that concentrate on preventing food crisis recurring, those that build connections between food aid providers, advice and support agencies and organisations working to promote healthy eating and reduce food waste.’(Scottish Government, no date)

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the statement that food banks are ‘not part of the welfare state’ could also be meant to refer to the fact that they are not a formal part of social security. An interesting question is raised here, however, by the relationship between foodbanks and local welfare assistance schemes (and discussed in the findings below) and the relationship between foodbanks and local Job Centre Plus centres.<sup>3</sup> In 2010 an agreement was made that Job Centre Plus agencies would hold Trussell Trust foodbank vouchers (Trussell Trust 2010). This was revoked in 2013 (Butler 2013B), but the question of this relationship is interesting to discuss briefly. The rationale lies in the notion that vouchers can be handed out when there is a delay or some kind of issue meaning payments are not coming

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<sup>3</sup> Job Centre Plus is the organisation that provides access to social security payments. (see <http://www.jobcentreguide.org/about/6/about-jobcentre-plus> )

through or have been stopped; yet what does this mean *in practice*, that these vouchers are used in this way – with the possibility of becoming a routine aspect of the administration of social security?

State funding, particularly in the form of contracts appears to be portrayed as the key marker for in/out of the welfare state. However, the subtleties highlighted above show that even if this were the case and food banks and other emergency food charity is seen as part of a wider network of social welfare, how these projects may in practice be used as part of state provision – in the giving and receipt of vouchers in the context of statutory services in particular- means the line may actually be harder to draw.

### **The impact of welfare reform**

This part of the chapter presents findings on the impact that recent changes to welfare policy are having on demand for emergency food assistance, and the shape of these organisations as they adapt and respond to growing demand. It presents empirical findings which indicate that both changes to the levels of social security entitlements and problematic welfare processes are impacting on needs.

The data collected indicated that changes to entitlements may be impacting on need for food charity by leaving people worse off. Research findings presented below highlight the impact of reforms which are reducing household incomes, such as the so called ‘bedroom tax’, changes to council tax benefits and extended sanction lengths. The abolition of the discretionary social fund and its replacement with short-term benefit advances and local welfare assistance (managed by local authorities) were seen by providers as particularly problematic. Social security processes in the administration of welfare payments were found to be problematic also where they were leaving people without an income. This included inappropriate sanctioning decisions, errors made in declaring people on Employment Support Allowance fit for work and more generally, ineffective administration of welfare payments where people’s payments are delayed or stopped and they

are left with no or heavily reduced income. The research findings relating to organisational change also indicated that it has been a time of adaptation for foodbanks and the Trussell Trust network, which is in the process of exploring ways of working appropriate for increased demand.

These findings suggest that particular care must be taken when discussing the different impacts of social security on the need for and shape of food banks. There appears to be a relationship not just between social security *reform* and food bank need but also between social security *administration* and food bank need. This indicates a need for clarity around the impact of current welfare reform (in terms of policies changing social security) on the one hand and the impact of social security processes (how it is administered) which are not necessarily part of these policy reforms on the other. Changes to social security policies (the social fund, housing benefit, benefit cap, extending sanctions) represent a change in the nature of social security entitlements. Problems brought about by sanctioning decisions, payment delays or inaccurate fitness assessments relate to social security processes. Much of the commentary relating to the impact of welfare reform appears, in practice, to conflate – or at least not neatly distinguish between – procedural problems which have been reported and problems which have arisen as a direct result of specific policies.

At the outset of this part of the chapter it is important to revisit a key methodological caveat highlighted in the methodology chapter (Chapter 3). In the fast-moving context of both welfare reform and food assistance growth the fact that the interviews were undertaken on or before September 2013 means that the chapter is not able to assess the impact of changes which have been implemented and/or begun to be felt more recently. Furthermore, given this timescale some of the data was collected before changes were implemented in April 2013 and some in the six months after. Where this has a bearing on the findings it is outlined and accounted for. However, the analysis revealed that participants interviewed before the changes were anxious in particular about the impact of changes to the social fund and Universal Credit. During and immediately after the changes participants continued to talk about the impact of problems associated with the social

fund (Universal Credit has not yet been fully rolled out) as well as other policy changes such as the spare room subsidy change to housing benefit. These findings are supported by claims made by the Trussell Trust nationally as well as other research as will be highlighted (Trussell Trust 2013; Dowler and Lambie-Mumford 2014; Sosenko et al 2013).

In terms of the findings from this research on the ways in which changing entitlements may be changing demand for food banks, the data revealed that in the projects interviewed the devolution of the social fund was causing particular concern and impacting on the numbers of people being referred to food banks. A key issue of concern in terms of the social fund was the huge amount of variation in the ways in which local authorities were approaching this provision with considerable confusion resulting in terms of what local people were entitled to and how they could access it.

‘The thing that’s really struck me is there’s such a variety of different ways of dealing with the social fund through local authorities, it’s exceptionally confusing and the way it was implemented wasn’t very clear to anybody. It’s left the third sector [...] overwhelmed.’

Trussell Trust Foodbank Network Director

Even more problematic, from the foodbanks’ perspectives were local authority approaches to the provision of crisis loans which in some way incorporated local food banks. In Bristol, for example, at the time of the interviews the council was consulting on a proposal which involved people being given up to one one-off payment card a year and thereafter being referred to local food banks by the agency implementing the system. The potential implications for this co-option of food banks into these support systems were clearly a concern for participants involved in foodbanks, many of whom were actively resisting:

‘I was sitting in a meeting the other week and I was told, [...] if we have a one off payment card for people here, the plan is that people can have one a year and then they’ll be referred to food banks by whatever agency takes this over and my answer to that was ‘you are assuming that we are going to take on your agency as a referral agency’ and I said ‘I’m not going to guarantee that’

East Bristol foodbank manager

Approaches to the social fund also vary by devolved nations. It is important to note that these data were from English foodbanks and different systems are in operation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

In September 2013, six months after the implementation of key reforms to social security, strategic-level staff also identified other policies which they felt were contributing to increasing demand, in particular the cap to benefit payments, the spare room subsidy, and tightening criteria for Employment Support Allowance leading people to be moved from an illness-based allowance to income support.

‘So those are three policies [spare room subsidy, tightened criteria of ESA and cap on uprating], which have driven up [need]. I’m not going to quote the stats because you’ve got them from us haven’t you. 52% of people coming to foodbanks since April, are there because of benefit delay or benefit change, whereas it was 43% the year before, 20% six or seven years ago. Foodbanks that have been around for years are seeing more and more people coming through.’

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman

These findings are supported by other research. For example Dowler and Lambie-Mumford (2014) indicates that changes to council tax benefit and the spare room subsidy may be having particular impact on food bank uptake and delays in payment or problems cause by changing benefit type can cause financial difficulty. Since April 2013 the Trussell Trust have also reported that they are providing a bigger proportion of parcels for problems relating to benefits than the same time last year (Trussell Trust 2013).

Separately from changing entitlements, problematic processes or procedures were also found to be impacting on demand for food banks. Decision making around sanctions were found to be particularly problematic from the perspective of food banks, where decisions were seen as unfair and, or, arbitrary.

‘we can be certain that those being sent to us with a sanction, it is, generally speaking, quite often a fairly unfair decision. Sometimes, I’ve got to say, a totally bizarre decision.’

Trussell Trust Foodbank Network Director

In addition to the nature of decision making, recent (coming into effect in October 2012) changes to the length of time sanctions can run from were also seen by some project managers as problematic, given the financial insecurity that many living on social security are already in:

'I think it's quite easy to tick the wrong thing on the phone or on the form and then you won't have any money and if you don't have any reserves you haven't got any money to buy food with. I think with sanctions being increased in length, this could be a more serious problem in the future. I mean if we're only going to give people three lots of food but they've been sanctioned for 6 months or something I'm not sure what they're going to do, I don't even know what the government expects them to do.'

Burngreave Foodbank Manager

These findings indicate that there could be two particular dimensions to the ways in which social security and reforms to it are impacting on need for emergency food; based around the distinction between reforms and administration. On the one hand, reforms are leading to changes to the level of entitlements people can receive, leaving them worse off, with reductions in their real income. On the other hand problematic processes such as mistaken sanctions or fitness assessments and delays in payments coming through can mean that people's incomes are heavily reduced (where they may still receive a tax credit or other type of benefit) or stopped altogether.

Within the context of this growing demand for and provision of food banks, the data revealed how both individual foodbank projects and the Trussell Trust network as a whole have been responding and adapting. Previous research identified how the foodbank franchise model and its faith basis were key factors in the development of the first one hundred and forty eight (Lambie 2011). The localised approach and notion of helping a neighbour were also seen as important. Since 2011 individual food banks and the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network are now more established and facing increasing demand. The data indicates that this has resulted in changing ways of working locally and the emergence of identifiable local 'systems'. It has also resulted in changes in ways of working nationally for the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network, including an on-going professionalisation and changes to processes and procedures on the one hand and a parallel



reimagining of the nature and conceptualisation of the localised aspects of individual projects.

The research in case study cities of Sheffield and Bristol highlighted the ways in which local relationships amongst individual projects were developing. They provide contrasting examples in some ways. Bristol had a formalised 'charter' to which many charities and local projects had signed up and carried a formal name – the Bristol 5K Partnership. The Partnership has a fairly logistical focus, working on collecting food across the city, leveraging funding and contemplating issues of food storage and transport.

'Over the last year we have been exploring how we can develop a more strategic approach to the way that we address the issue of food poverty and that's basically saying how can we work together in a way which is working with the council, working with other stakeholders, working with the food industry, working with FareShare, Foodbank Network, Matthew Tree Project, all of those organisations with an interest in food poverty, how can we plan and implement addressing the issues of food poverty in a more strategic way and we've done that under what we're now calling the Bristol 5 K partnership'

FareShare National Trustee and Trustee of FareShare South West

Sheffield on the other hand had seen a looser network of food bank projects develop, referred to as the Sheffield Food Bank Network who meet regularly on a relatively informal basis to share knowledge and experiences.

'I think it is important that we all know what we're doing. It's important for simple, logistical reasons to make sure we're all, well one that we're not all feeding the same people and that people aren't just going round from food bank to food bank to food bank, there's some kind of semblance of order to that, secondly that there's some kind of semblance of understanding of some of these issues I suppose so I suppose I do so part of my role being there is to be a voice to some of these issues that I've raised and the fact that even if people don't agree with me, at least they've been said and at least they've been heard then. But I suppose I also see it, I think it is important also from a faith perspective to get this kind of like a shared understanding of what we're actually doing around this issue as church.'

Parsons Cross Initiative Manager

Both groups of projects used these relationships to work through issues of geographical boundaries and make clear which food banks covered which areas of the cities. They had both had interaction with their local councils and

some local Members of Parliament. In both cities there were queries over the aims and anticipated outcomes of these relationships and at times feelings of ambivalence to getting together without clear aims in mind. Yet at the same time in both cases there was reluctance on the part of some members to formalise the networks. Such networks appear to provide opportunities for knowledge sharing and for overcoming tensions, in particular any conflicts surrounding supermarket collections or food drives and, where there are independent and Trussell Trust projects side by side, they can provide the opportunity for managers to find ways to work together and establish geographical boundaries. Whilst such co-ordination may be beneficial for learning and good practice sharing they do raise an issue of how far localised systems could be seen to be emerging and becoming embedded.

At a national level, organisational change in the Trussell Trust Network appears to be underway in terms of both the processes and procedures in use and relatedly how the idea of a 'local' foodbank is conceptualised. In terms of process and procedures, an important new layer of management has emerged in the Trussell Trust in the shape of Regional Development Officers (RDOs) and there is now one for every region in England as well as two in Wales and a growing team in Scotland. There is also now employed by the Trust a Partnership Co-ordinator in London who brokers requests from business to support foodbanks in the city.

A conversation was being had in the Trust at the time of the interviews around whether the Network required a different way of thinking around the storage and distribution of donated food with larger hubs that stored the food from which foodbanks drew down, in order to reduce the costs and volunteer input required to run a foodbank project.

'There is a situation now where foodbanks, because of all the extra collections we are getting, are getting spikes of food that are really difficult to store. Rather than people having to take on more expensive rental storage, the hope is that we can put hubs in'

Trussell Trust Head of Fundraising

At the same time the data also indicated that the Trust were in the process of considering reconceptualising the way foodbanks were identified. At the time

of writing the Network counts the number of franchised foodbanks, but those foodbank projects will have distribution centres across the area that it covers and sometimes these are run by different volunteer groups. The question has been raised as to whether these distribution centres should be taken as the focus for understanding the scale of the work and identifying locality:

‘People talk to me about, “My foodbank.” They don’t necessarily mean the foodbank ... But they mean the distribution centre, that is in their part of town.’

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman

This could be seen as running parallel to the question of larger storage hubs and distribution networks; and this re-conceptualisation of distribution centres could be a way of getting around some of the procedural and logistical issues that the storage hubs are set up in response to. A knock-on effect of this may be that the Trussell Trust foodbank Network as a system may become more closely identifiable as a food bank / food pantry system where the local food pantries draw down food stuffs from a centralised food hub (although reference was made in one strategic interview to a system where the food would be stored for the foodbanks that collected it, thereby maintaining the ‘food for local people from local people’ approach).

‘But with logistics it’s slightly different. We’ve said, and we’re looking at the advice here. Principle, if you collect the food locally you want to promise somebody that it will go to local people. So if I get the food in Tower Hamlets and it disappears off to a big warehouse in Rugby, it needs to come back to Tower Hamlets. Now the logicians have said, “No problem at all.” We do that all the time. “It’s binning.” Okay, that’s fine.’

Trussell Trust Executive Chairman

The quote above suggests that this conceptualisation may open up a different way of thinking about localism or retaining localism, where there is a national network, regional co-ordination, a city or town-wide foodbank but very localised operations in the form of the handing out of food itself. Both this increasingly localised conception of distribution centres and the idea of larger food hubs allows for much greater capacity – for foodbanks to become bigger, able to support more and more distribution centres which, when identified this locally can multiply with lots of potential for growth.

Food banks therefore appear to be responding and adapting to growing demand in particular ways at various geographical levels. Firstly, by working closer together at a local level and nationally, streamlining procedures and rethinking scales of food storage and its provision to accommodate the future trajectory of need.

### **Where next? The future relationship between foodbanks and the welfare state**

The findings presented above highlight the symbiotic relationship between the withdrawal and retrenchment of the welfare state and the growth in the provision of and need for foodbanks. The consequence of this simultaneous retrenchment of the welfare state and foodbanks filling the gaps left behind risk these projects, however unintentionally, becoming part of the welfare state and actually enabling its further withdrawal.

There could be two eventualities to this end. Firstly, food banks could become increasingly embedded parts of the welfare state where the state maintains responsibility for alleviating poverty (through, for example a continuation of local welfare assistance schemes). Alternatively, with an end to funding for local assistance schemes, reductions in social security entitlements and failures to rectify inadequate processes, food banks could remain distinct non-government funded initiatives, but ones which do their work in local communities in the absence of state responsibility for poverty alleviation.

We appear to have reached an important moment in food banking in the UK. Whilst currently, food banks appear to be doing their best to resist incorporation into social security processes, the relationship between locally run welfare and local food banks is particularly concerning. If these systems routinely refer people to food banks instead of providing financial support themselves, it is hard to see where the line can be drawn. And if funding is withdrawn altogether from this support, as has been reported (LGA 2014) then that opens up an urgent question of what role that leaves food banks

playing in local communities. At a national level, food bank demand appears to be signalling the inadequacy of both social security provision and the processes through which it is delivered. Similarly, if these issues are not addressed, the point at which food banks become an extension (if not a formal part of) a failing welfare state might not be far away.

The framework presented at the beginning of the chapter located food banks as distinct charitable organisations, separate from ‘the welfare state’ – albeit in slightly problematic ways, with key caveats. But what implications do the impact of welfare reform and the future trajectory of further reform have for this relationship? The notion of ‘responsibility’ – namely the responsibility that the state assumes for the protection against and prevention of poverty – can be utilised in exploring this question and two potential eventualities are reflected upon here. Notably, the idea that where non-governmental (charitable or private sector) organisations are brought in by the state to help deliver policies of prevention or protection, responsibility remains with and is acknowledged by the state, thereby incorporating them within a formal ‘welfare state’ (see Veit-Wilson, 2000). The distinguishing emphasis is therefore on the state maintaining this responsibility, even though it may bring in other organisations to help deliver it.

Given the developing relationships between some food banks and local authorities, and the nature of referral procedures, in particular formalised relationships between the Department for Work and Pensions and food banks, the issue of how far food banks may become in practice *part of the welfare state* is raised. Whilst local authorities may not be establishing service level agreements with food banks as part of their local welfare assistance schemes, and similarly referral relationships between food banks and statutory bodies may not be formalised, the lines of distinction may become hard to draw if practices become embedded and localised systems of formal and informal support develop. However, in such an eventuality responsibility may still to some extent be being held by the state in the form of statutory organisations, local authorities, and government departments.

On the other hand, however, food banks may remain distinct initiatives but find themselves *working in the absence of the state* taking responsibility for adequate protection against poverty (food charity assuming the responsibility for care is discussed in detail in the chapter on Care). This possibility is raised by the potential abolition of local welfare assistance schemes, reductions in social security entitlements to even more inadequate levels and failures to rectify inadequate procedures and processes. If no emergency assistance is provided by the state at local level when no other social security option is available, food banks and other charitable initiatives may become the only agencies who are taking responsibility for helping local people in need. Similarly, where reductions in social security entitlements (through extended sanctions, caps, changes to housing benefit and council tax benefit) leave people worse off and unable to afford even the most basic of diets, it may then be food banks that take responsibility for helping people who turn to them because they cannot feed themselves and their families.

There could be a third, slightly more subtle eventuality. This could see, through the voucher referral system, foodbanks not necessarily becoming a distinct part of the system but effectively becoming enrolled within its delivery providing, as it does, a 'tool' for statutory services to call on as part of their work when tackling chronic need.

However things develop, local welfare assistance is likely to be key to determining the role of food banks if systems develop around them or nothing is provided by the state to replace it. The impact of the recent reductions in social security entitlements is at this point not adequately evidenced and so the implications remain relatively un-explored. Evidence submitted to the All Party Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty in Britain, based on the evidence presented here, recommended:

'That a full review of the impact of social security processes and changes to entitlements on the need for food assistance be undertaken, with particular focus on:

- I. the adequacy of reformed social security income levels, as well as the level of the minimum wage;

II. the fairness and effectiveness of social security processes, especially fitness assessments, sanctioning decisions and payment administration; and

III. the adequacy, sustainability and accessibility of local welfare assistance.'

(Lambie-Mumford 2014c)

## **Conclusion**

It is currently a dynamic time for social protection in the UK. There is on-going change and discussion driven by ideology and questions of who should be providing which kinds of services, who is best equipped to do so and what the best kind of support looks like. Overall, what is emerging is a leaner welfare state and this retrenchment is impacting on both the need for and shape of food banks. The story of the rise in need for and changing shape of food banks and other food charity is ultimately representative of the wider shifts which are occurring in the era of welfare austerity. Indicators of rising need could be seen to represent policies of increasing conditionality, for example where people need food vouchers because of length of sanctions or having failed a fitness assessment for disability benefits. At the same time, they also represent the individualisation of risk which has underpinned the programme of welfare austerity, with people left without adequate assistance from the state and forced to turn to charitable responses. This story of food charity could also be seen to embody the decreased role of the state in favour of community responses in the context of emphasis being placed more firmly on individual and community-based responsibility.

Whilst the rise of foodbanks could well represent the increasing responsibility held by civil society-based social protection the right to food approach sets out that the state is the duty-bearer. Furthermore, the right to food stipulates that there is a need to ensure that everyone's right is fulfilled when they cannot provide food for themselves. This means that any shift from

entitlement to charity (which is not a right and accessible to all) is a particularly problematic aspect of the contemporary shift in food based social protection. These findings appear to represent just that, indicating that the levels of entitlements and the administration processes which organise them are not adequate or sufficiently streamlined to prevent hunger in the UK and those organisations which are responding to this are local level community projects. Having said this, a right to food approach does not necessarily mean that social protection is provided exclusively by the state, as duty-bearer, in the form of welfare provision. It could involve other interventions by the state, for example in the food market or labour market to ensure financial security or fairer access to affordable food. It could also mean that civil society organisations are involved in social protection in some way, so long as this was entitlement-based. Ultimately, the state has responsibility to ensure that the right to food is fulfilled adequately but what this fulfilment looks like, in practice, is open for discussion.



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## Conclusion

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## Chapter 8

### Implications for realising the Right to Food in the UK

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The empirical chapters of this thesis have explored the acceptability and sustainability of emergency food systems, in particular in relation to the availability and accessibility of the food they provide (Chapters 4 and 5), and the role of charity and the state in this provision and in relation to the right to food (Chapters 6 and 7). In doing so, these chapters explored the nature of emergency food provision as a system, the adequacy of that system in terms of its social acceptability and sustainability and critically engaged with the role of charity in helping people to access food.

A large amount of data was collected through the duration of this study and this thesis has done the best it can to shed light on the wide range of insights and detail that those data provide into the emergent and changing phenomenon of emergency food provision in the United Kingdom. The focus placed upon a system-level analysis and wider socio-political critique enabled the empirical part of the thesis to present new findings about these systems and the relationship they have to wider social and political shifts and trajectories into the future.

These findings reveal the complex nature of the systems, in relation to the range of moral and ethical motivations and values which give meaning to the endeavour from the perspective of those running these organisations and local projects. The analysis also serves to highlight some of the tensions embedded within these systems in terms of the accessibility of the food provided to those in need. Framing the analysis in terms of a socio-political critique enables the thesis to explore how the emergence of these systems is intimately connected to particular shifts which open up space for this kind of provision – such as a retrenched welfare state and increasingly diversified safety nets – and link to wider political and discursive shifts emphasising individualised responsibility and risk for poverty.

This Conclusion chapter discusses some of the key findings arising from across these analyses, how they extend our knowledge of emergency food systems and their implications for how we might progressively realise the right to food in the United Kingdom. The chapter is guided by the theme of 'opportunities in crisis', which was introduced in Chapter 1 (Introduction) and emphasises the question of what can be *done* on the basis of the findings presented and how the particular circumstances underpinning the phenomenon (emergency food provision and need for it) may actually open up the chance for more progressive ways forward. Emphasis is therefore placed on the implications the study's findings have and how they can practically be responded to.

The chapter begins by discussing the implications of the key findings from each empirical part of the thesis. This is followed by a discussion of some of the key issues and themes which arise that cut across both of these empirical parts and how the thesis's findings represent a considerable step forward in knowledge about emergency food provision in the UK. The particular 'opportunities' which can be identified within the context of 'crisis' are outlined and the utility of the right to food approach for drawing conclusions from the thesis is discussed.

Three key conclusions drawn from the findings of the thesis are then presented, each in turn. The first relates to the need to challenge minimalist approaches to defining and responding to the problem of food poverty. Based on findings surrounding the importance of the social acceptability of food experiences and the wider context of vulnerability and insecurity on which need for emergency food provision is situated, this conclusion calls instead for broad conceptualisations which take into account structural determinants of need for emergency food provision and the importance of social inclusion and responses which focus on enabling everyone to have socially acceptable and secure food experiences. The second conclusion relates to the importance of rights-based policies to move us forward from the current situation, where the findings suggest there is an increasing reliance on emergency food provision in the context of a retrenched welfare state. These policies could look like 'parent policies' guiding particular

legislation and making room for other non-governmental actors to enact their own responsibilities. Thirdly, the thesis concludes that given findings relating to the limitations of the food provision itself when compared to other relational and social contributions by right to food standards, there could be a progressive social and political role for emergency food provision in realising the right to food, where organisations focus on the individual and local-level social care they provide and their political work through advocacy, campaigning and holding other actors to account. The chapter concludes with some key recommendations, based on the thesis findings, for emergency food providers, policy makers, NGOs, individuals and local communities, the food industry and researchers.

### **Empirical Findings: advancing knowledge of emergency food provision in the United Kingdom.**

The findings presented in the previous four chapters, which comprised two distinct empirical parts to the thesis, have important implications for our knowledge of emergency food systems in the UK. This part of the Conclusion chapter discusses the implications of the findings within each part distinctly and then goes on to discuss some of the key issues and themes which come out of the findings overall and cut across these two parts.

The findings of part one, relating to the adequacy of the acceptability and sustainability of emergency food provision tell us that these systems are ultimately not adequate or sustainable by right to food standards which emphasise the importance of the social acceptability of food acquisition on the one hand and the sustainability of food access into the future on the other. They illustrate how emergency food provision forms an identifiably ‘other’ system to the socially accepted mode of food acquisition in the UK today – the commercial food market through shopping (Chapter 4). They also show that providers are not necessarily able to make food available through these systems, with their ability to do so shaped in important ways by the structure of the food industry in which they operate (Chapter 5).

Importantly, when looking at the role these systems might have in progressive ways towards solutions to food poverty and realising the right to food, emergency food systems are ultimately experienced as 'other' with powerful othering discourses associated with them (Chapter 4). This has important implications for the question of acceptability, given the experience and social construction of exclusion that the findings indicate may be embedded. Furthermore, the findings highlight that people do not always have the ability to access emergency food projects and the food available from them whenever they wish, for as long as they need (Chapter 5), questioning the systems' ability to provide systematic and dependable sources of food to all those in need.

The findings from the second empirical part indicate that the state is, if anything, retreating from its duty to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food and emergency food provision is assuming the responsibility to fulfil this right, where it can and in its own way. On the basis of this research it appears that emergency food provision is increasingly assuming responsibility for protecting against food poverty when it occurs (Chapter 6). These organisations are assuming this responsibility in parallel to the significant withdrawal of the welfare state (in the shape of cuts to funding of services and reductions in entitlements to social security) which is impacting on both the level and nature of need for emergency food and the context of other welfare support in which these projects are operating (Chapter 7). The findings of this part of the thesis also indicate that emergency food providers are responding in a form – professionalised and at a national scale – which is a product of welfare diversification over the last two decades and the changing nature of the voluntary and community sector (VCS) (Chapters 6 and 7) but which also represents a marginalisation and privatisation of care (Chapter 6). The implications of these findings are that there is a symbiotic relationship between the rise of these national scale emergency food assistance charities, the retrenchment of the welfare state, and the larger role being played by an increasingly professionalised VCS sector in the care for the poor in the UK.

Three key themes are also identifiable across the findings of both empirical parts presented in the thesis. These have important implications for how the discussion about emergency food provision can be moved on and tangible responsive actions to it might develop.

The first theme which arises from findings across both parts of the thesis relates to the way in which emergency food provision represents an important embodiment and performance of caring (Chapter 6) and morality (Chapter 4). The data collected from providers very clearly and strongly set out the moral imperatives which motivated their work (to reduce waste and hunger) and how their projects provided spaces in which acts of caring were performed and in which vulnerable people could be cared for. As an embodiment of these social and moral acts and motivations, emergency food provision can be celebrated. These organisations clearly provide the space and opportunity for people in local communities to express care for and generosity towards their neighbours and at a time when state provision is reducing and increasingly conditional.

The second theme to come out of the findings is that of the importance of structures in determining need for (Chapter 7), access to and availability of food (Chapter 5) in emergency food systems. Building on the definition of food poverty used in the research which points to the importance of structures in determining the accessibility of food generally (for example income, retail and transport), the findings from the empirical data served to highlight the important role played by other structures (namely the welfare state, food industry and emergency food systems themselves) in determining the nature of the provision and the experience of access to it. The structure of the welfare state was found to play an important role in both driving need for emergency food and (as a consequence of this) shaping the nature of projects (Chapter 7). The availability of food within emergency food systems was found to be influenced by the structure of the food industry, where projects relied on retailers for access to consumers (to solicit donations) or surplus (from further down supply chains) (Chapter 5). The structure of emergency food systems themselves were also found to be significant in terms of determining access to the food they provided, particularly when

referrals were required, projects were only open a few times in a week or limits to the amount of help any one person could receive were imposed (Chapter 5). This highlights the importance of taking structures into account when studying the emergency food phenomenon. Studying these projects in isolation would not reveal the important political and socio-economic drivers of both the need for and shape of emergency food provision or the ways in which the agency of (potential) recipients can be constrained by the systems themselves.

The third and final theme to be pulled out from findings across the two empirical parts of the thesis is the way in which emergency food provision represents, simultaneously, an embodiment (Chapters 4 and 6), consequence (Chapters 5 and 7) and contestation (Chapters 4 and 6) of neo-liberal processes in systems of food, welfare and caring. Particular shifts, such as the retrenchment of the welfare state (in terms of social security provision), the changing nature of caring for people experiencing poverty (reductions in funding for state services and increasing emphasis on the voluntary sector and local communities to respond) and a food system continually dominated by large retailers (who control pricing and dominate the country's food retail infrastructure) form particularly important backdrops to the rise of emergency food provision. The findings set out across the empirical parts of this thesis highlight the complex and contradictory nature of the relationship between emergency food provision and these neo-liberal dynamics.

In the first instance the findings suggest that emergency food organisations form a protest against these shifts. The way in which these organisations embody moral imperatives of reducing hunger and food waste, both identified as consequences of unjust (food, welfare and caring) systems, were made apparent by the data (Chapter 4). Similarly, the ways in which these systems provided important spaces for caring, compared to less caring welfare systems or in the absence of state care were also apparent (Chapter 6). Yet, this notion that emergency food systems are simply protests against neo-liberalising shifts is contradicted by other findings which suggest that these systems might not just exist as a consequence of these shifts but may,

furthermore, embody them. The rise of emergency food provision could be said, from these findings, to be a consequence of such shifts particularly in relation to how welfare retrenchment has driven need for the provision (Chapter 7) and how interest from the food industry, driven by corporate social responsibility agendas, has seen access to surplus food and privately donated food increase exponentially in recent years. The notion that emergency food provision embodies neo-liberalising shifts, however, could rest in the ways in which these organisations represent a privatised approach to care (Chapter 6) and an exclusion from mainstream food experiences involving commercial markets and shopping (Chapter 4).

The findings presented in this thesis represent a considerable step forward in our knowledge about emergency food provision in the UK. They provide the first systematic systems-based analysis and tell us that whilst key social and market based values are embedded within these systems they are problematic from a human rights perspective. The findings also highlight the role that welfare politics – at the level of both service provision and social security – is having in driving the need for and shape of these initiatives. They also serve to advance our knowledge of emergency food systems by highlighting the vulnerability of people in food poverty in relation to these systems as a result of their lack of agency to access this provision and the food made available within them. In so doing the contribution of the research to literature on emergency food provision in the UK is particularly apparent given its emergent nature (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). Through applying and developing a right to food framework the thesis and its empirical findings are also able to contribute to a better understanding of food rights and the role of emergency food provision in their realisation in the UK as well as provide points for comparison with other countries in the global north and the work of rights-focused researchers such as Riches (2011).

More broadly however, these findings and the theoretical developments made in the thesis also make important contributions to other areas of academic literature, particularly wider food and social policy research. In the first instance, the thesis is able to contribute important evidence to the growing food studies literature of a new phenomenon in the UK food system,



one which could be said to embody key failures of that system. In doing so it could contribute to work on the nature of the commercial food systems itself, experiences of the commensality of food across different food experiences and studies of notions of 'alternative' food provisioning (see for example Jackson and the Conanx Group 2013, Kneafsey et al 2008).

Secondly, the thesis provides key theoretical and empirical evidence relating to one particular consequence of the changing nature of the social contract in the UK and makes an important contribution to social policy research by providing detailed evidence on the symbiotic relationship between the growth of charitable emergency food provision and the retrenchment of the welfare state. Historically, social policy research in the UK has had very limited engagement with the issue of food poverty (or related concepts) in isolation from studies of poverty generally (the work of Dowler 2003 being an important exception). This research could help pave the way for more attention being given to issues of food poverty and food charity by social policy researchers in the UK in the future.

In applying care ethics (Lawson 2007) to the study of emergency food provision the research has also been able to contribute to this particular literature by showing how care ethics can further advance our knowledge of social phenomena which are complex and contradictory and which operate and impact at various sites and scales simultaneously. By employing theories of agency in this research the thesis has also drawn attention to the particular importance of theories of power when exploring the food system and access to it and, related to the emergency food systems which have emerged, has been shown to be particularly insightful when related to the work of Poppendieck (1998) and Tarasuk and Eakin (2005).

### **Opportunities in crisis: towards conclusions**

So, in the context of the evidence presented in this thesis and elsewhere in related studies of contemporary experiences of poverty, as ad hoc charitable organisations assume responsibility for those in acute food poverty in the

context of a reduced welfare state, on-going austerity and rising costs of living, what can be *done*? The rest of this Conclusion chapter is framed by this notion of opportunities in the context of crisis and specifically explores how we can draw on the charitable provision we have seen emerge and responses and reactions to it in order to identify more progressive ways forward.

Potential opportunities lie in the current shape, scale and nature of reaction to emergency food provision and food poverty in the UK. In the first instance, the scale of participation in these systems in terms of volunteers and numbers of people donating food indicates the extent of public concern over the issue of food poverty. In the year 2013-2014 the Trussell Trust Foodbank Network reported that approximately 30,000 people volunteered at foodbanks across the country and that 8,318 tonnes of food were donated by the public (Trussell Trust no date<sup>A</sup>). Secondly, the range of organisations involved in emergency food provision suggests that the wider voluntary and community sector are also mobilised by the issue of food poverty. Multiple faith groups, including various denominations of Christian churches are involved in foodbank provision and a range of initiatives will be holding foodbank vouchers in local communities. The involvement and engagement of the food industry in these charities – through partnership arrangements – whilst driven by corporate social responsibility agendas, could be the genesis of opportunities for more meaningful engagement on factors that drive food poverty that are within their power to respond to.

Beyond involvement in the provision itself several large national NGOs and charities are mobilised by issues of food poverty and rising reliance on food banks as illustrated by publications and press releases such as Cooper and Dumpleton (2013), Cooper et al (2014), CPAG (2013) and Save the Children (2013). Further potential opportunities reside in the political response by policy makers to the rise of emergency food provision that is identifiable. The All Party Parliamentary Inquiry into hunger and food poverty in Britain is a particularly important opportunity for the pursuit of more progressive responses.

The question then becomes one around how to translate this movement and sense of injustice into something solution-based while the food industry, policy makers, NGO and charity sectors and public interest is engaged? This conclusion chapter utilises the right to food notion of policy frameworks which open up and protect opportunities for all actors to exercise responsibility to progressive realisation of the right to food.

### **The utility of the right to food**

There are two key reasons why the right to food helps to frame the practical conclusions which can be drawn from this research. Firstly, it is well suited to current policy-making contexts which incorporate multiple actors and interests and secondly, it helps us to think about and understand the role of a whole range of stakeholders.

The appropriateness of the right to food approach for the contemporary context lies in its affinity with both the processes involved in policy making and the capacity of the state to respond and drive a comprehensive response in the UK today. Policy network analysis highlights the ways in which policy-making is not conducted through formal institutions but instead through informal networks which involve complex interplay between ministers, civil servants, pressure and interest groups and many others in the process of arriving at particular policies (see Richards and Smith 2002 and Hudson et al 2007). The right to food approach fits well within this networked reality and is particularly 'actionable' within it. It is inclusive of the wide variety of actors and groups that have a stake in the agenda and takes account of the complex roles played by each and every one of them. The right to food as a social ethic – a parent of policies in pursuit of this social good – may therefore be particularly helpful in so far as it provides a loose framework, giving everyone the space to enact their responsibilities and to acknowledge the role of a wide variety of actors.

In addition to this affinity with the policy process there is a rather realist factor which the right to food approach may help with in moving towards

progressive ways forward. Namely, that in practice the state has – for reasons of necessity or ideology – little capacity (or political will) to respond comprehensively by itself to the problem of food poverty. Politically and practically we are facing a much leaner welfare state and an ever-increasing reluctance to interfere with any kind of market. Therefore this more networked approach fits this reality also, in its focus on other actors to take responsibilities alongside the state. The notion of the state as the duty-bearer within this context, then, is particularly helpful. It places accountability with the state but not the responsibility for all actions towards progressive realisation of the right to food.

The utility of a right to food approach also lies in the way that it helps us to build a better picture of these different roles, to make space and account for the responsibilities of other actors which need to be played out in these frameworks. General Comment 12 of the UN Economic and Social Council outlined that ‘individuals, families, local communities, non-governmental organisations, civil society organisations, as well as the private business sector’ all have responsibilities in the realisation of the right to food (UNESCO 1999). Employing this approach to thinking about solutions to food poverty therefore provides us with an opportunity to ask and point to what these roles and responsibilities are in practice now, in theory should be in the future and those which are yet to be explored.

In the context of the contemporary food system in the UK individuals are often seen as consumers, with a corresponding role in shaping that system through purchasing power and exercising consumer choice (Kneafsey et al 2013). However the findings of this research problematise this traditional conceptualisation and instead highlight the more complex and relational role some individuals play in terms of supporting friends and family (see Aluwalia et al 1998; Pfeiffer et al 2011 and Hossein et al 2011 for UK evidence) or taking part in community-based emergency food provision.

The role of communities is also brought into question by findings which suggest that local communities are increasingly assuming the responsibility for caring for local people in food poverty by setting up foodbanks or

FareShare franchises or engaging in local level independent provision activity (independent food banks, soup runs and others). Whilst there is much celebration of these endeavours the findings also indicate a tension in the sense of 'duty' that drives these initiatives, as opposed to opportunism. There are a range of questions regarding the role and actual responsibilities of communities in realising the right to food in the UK which remain unanswered and one which is sometimes raised by those from inside these emergency food movements is that of whether they are better placed to care for people in food poverty and whether they can care more effectively than the states.

In both practice and theory there appears to be a particularly constructive role for NGOs to play in advocacy and campaigning for comprehensive responses to food poverty and the realisation of the right to food. Several organisations are already involved in this kind of high profile campaigning around food poverty and the rise of food banks and the work of Church Action on Poverty and Oxfam are particularly important examples. A key question that is raised, however, is how this work can be done constructively, without undermining the motivations of those involved in the provision.

The role and responsibilities of government in relation to the right to food appear to be clearly articulated and are to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food. Previous research with consumers show that they too place a considerable emphasis on the role of government to realise (in the case of that project) food security. In the Defra funded research in 2010, 77% of survey respondents felt that the government was "responsible for ensuring basic food items are affordable for all UK residents"; 64% felt it was the government's role to "ensure UK residents have access to a wide choice of affordable nutritious food at all times" (Kneafsey et al 2013, 109); and in the workshops participants assigned overall responsibility to the government for all aspects of food security.

There are many questions that could be asked of the food industry's role and responsibilities in the realisation of the right to food. Importantly, the findings presented in the thesis have identified the ways in which the food industry

works with the food charities under study. Whilst there may be a productive role for the food industry to play within charitable food endeavours the role of the food industry beyond this is clearly critical (and most likely where their key responsibilities actually lie). The research presented in Kneafsey et al (2013, 109) around consumer perceptions of responsibility for food security found that 'in terms of affordability, 'retailers' were assigned most responsibility after 'government''. However, consumers were sceptical about retailers' motivations, highlighting their accountability to shareholders and so looked to government to 'temper market forces and ensure some degree of social responsibility' (Kneafsey et al 2013, 109).

The responsibility for private business would of course extend much wider to include not just food producers and businesses involved in supply chains but for example financial institutions involved in futures trading and many others. Importantly, it currently appears that the role of the food industry beyond supporting charity is not being engaged with within the contemporary discussions of food poverty. Much more work establishing what responsibilities this sector has in the realisation of the human right to food is therefore required.

### **Thesis conclusions**

Three sets of conclusions are drawn on the basis of the findings presented in the thesis and framed by the right to food approach. The first is that there is a need to challenge minimalist approaches to understanding the problem of, practically responding to and conceiving the solution of food poverty. The second conclusion is that there is a need for rights-driven policies and frameworks through which a range of stakeholders are held to account and facilitated to work towards the realisation of the right to food for all. The third and final conclusion is that emergency food provision could have a particularly important social and political role to play in the realisation of the right to food, providing individual care, advocacy and political pressure.

## **Conclusion 1: the need to challenge minimums**

Like much poverty research (including the work of Lister 2004 and Townsend 1979) the thesis has highlighted that food poverty and food rights should not be understood in relation to minimums. Minimalist approaches that emphasise acute need (instead of wider vulnerabilities) and nutritionally minimal diets (instead of taking account of the important role food plays in social inclusion) are not progressive and pose important challenges for the future realisation of the right to food. The first conclusion of the thesis is therefore a need to resist minimalist approaches in relation to how need and food poverty are defined, how responses are judged and solutions conceptualised.

This conclusion is drawn from findings which show that the adequacy of food is about much more than nutritional intake (Chapter 4) and also relates to the social acceptability of the means by which food is acquired and the ways in which food experiences can be socially exclusive. Findings relating to the sustainability of food sources (Chapter 5) also serve to highlight that it is not just important to consider whether immediate need can be met now but whether that need can continue to be met into the future. Findings relating to the effects of welfare retrenchment on the need for and shape of emergency food provision (Chapter 7) also highlight that reductionist shifts in entitlements and increasingly conditioned social security provision have important impacts on people's ability to access adequate food. The findings of Chapter 6 are particularly important for drawing this first conclusion, however, and provide evidence of how conceptualisations of crisis need for emergency food assistance are embedded within an appreciation for the wider vulnerabilities and underpinning drivers of experiences of food poverty and poverty more generally and how success of these initiatives is understood to relate to a range of relational and social contributions beyond the provision of a parcel of emergency food.

Broader conceptualisations and definitions of the problem of food poverty emphasise the importance not just of dietary intake but of the experience of acquiring food and the sustainability of those acquisition sources into the

future. They emphasise social acceptability and social inclusion, highlighting the important role food experiences have in shaping lived realities of exclusion and isolation. Similarly, the way in which need for emergency food provision is understood – often in terms of ‘crisis’ – should also be located within a wider understanding. Notions of crisis should be situated within a wider appreciation of the underpinning complexity and precarity of household experiences of food poverty and poverty and incorporate notions of mild and moderate levels of food poverty too.

Responses to experiences of food poverty should also not be minimalist. Instead of focussing on minimum nutrients or foods or incomes responses should take into account social justice, inclusion and participation in society. Whilst some responses will be required which fulfil the human right to food, the wider progressive responses which will also be required will need to focus upon realising everyone’s participation within socially accepted food experiences and the enjoyment of food’s facilitative social role.

Solutions to the problem of food poverty should also be framed broadly, as the right to food is. They should be ambitious and inclusive of all stakeholders. Conceptualisations of these solutions should strive not just to relieve or even solve food poverty but should strive for equitable food experiences which are just and secure into the future.

## **Conclusion 2: The importance of rights-based policies**

The second key conclusion of the thesis is that rights-based policies would be a vital part of the progressive realisation of the right to food in the UK. The human rights approach identifies the state as duty-bearer and, drawing on the work of Sen (2008) states can pursue the realisation of human rights through implementing policies which are ‘parented’ by the right to food.

This conclusion is drawn from findings relating to the increasing prominence of and reliance on a system that is neither adequate nor sustainable by right to food standards (Chapters 4 and 5). The fact that we have seen the growth of a system which can only respond to immediate need and that represents



increasingly privatised and marginalised ways of caring for people in poverty (Chapter 6) at the same time as there has been a retrenchment of provision from the welfare state (Chapter 7) means that in order for food rights to be realised in the UK clear frameworks for action are required.

In relation to emergency food provision, whilst the right to food approach sets out the space for roles and responsibilities for food charities such as emergency food providers, Special Rapporteur DeSchutter was critical of circumstances where charitable initiatives come to be relied upon by a state for protecting citizens against food insecurity. On returning from a visit to Canada in 2012 DeSchutter wrote:

‘The reliance on food banks is symptomatic of a broken social protection system and the failure of the State to meet its obligations to its people’. (DeSchutter 2012)

Within the context of many different actors, States as duty bearers are expected to ‘take steps to achieve *progressively* the full realisation of the right to adequate food’ (original emphasis, UNESCO 1999). General Comment 12 also sets out that states should ‘provide an environment that facilitates implementation’ of the responsibilities of other actors. There is a clear proactive role set out for governments, therefore, and in so far as they are ‘duty-bearers’ accountability resides with them in terms of ensuring progress towards this realisation.

Policies ‘parented’ by the right to food alongside right to food strategies (FAO 2005) could help to ensure progress towards the realisation of the right. They could serve to hold the state and other actors to account.

### **Conclusion 3: The social and political role of emergency food provision in realising the right to food**

As a mode of food provision and acquisition emergency food provision poses a number of challenges from a right to food perspective and when condensing the findings of this research a number of critiques can be levelled at this provision. The first is universality. Food charity is not a

population-wide response and critically, it is not an entitlement. Furthermore there are questions of accessibility in relation to both how access to food charity is managed and thresholds set out and the accessibility of that charity when access is granted (location, opening times for example). The social injustice of food charity is also important from a right to food perspective and in terms of social acceptability, as discussed in part one, food charity is outside of acceptable methods for acquiring food in the UK.

In relation to preventing food poverty and playing an enabling role in food access, in the first instance, charitable initiatives like the one studied provide relief from the symptoms of food poverty. Whilst they may, when designed and managed appropriately, alleviate experiences of hunger they are necessarily not able to solve the underlying drivers (see Lambie-Mumford et al 2014). The food charities under study also emphasise responding to food poverty crisis, rather than overcoming vulnerability to food poverty. The right to food approach also requires emphasis on mild and moderate experiences and overcoming these, not just on responding to acute need. Finally, there is a question of how far food charity may mask state accountability and responsibility. The ways in which this kind of charity may enable states to 'look the other way' (Riches 2002, p648) could be detrimental to ensuring that states act on their obligations to prevent and protect against food poverty as a pre-requisite for the realisation of the human right to food.

Therefore, the food acquisition and provision role of emergency food provision might be limited as part of the progressive realisation of the right to food. Having said this, based on the research presented here, these initiatives may have particularly important social and political roles to play.

Emergency food provision may in the first instance have a constructive role to play at the individual and local level providing spaces of care, ad hoc protection and facilitating social and welfare networks locally. The findings of Chapters 4 and 6 in particular highlight that emergency food projects play a more complex role than is first apparent. Whilst food poverty outcomes from the food on offer and the mechanisms for obtaining it may be limited, emergency food providers play an important social role as spaces of care

and facilitators of social support and welfare networks. At an individual level the research indicates that these initiatives can provide important spaces of care, but there can also be social outcomes at the community level as well. Through providing opportunities for volunteering and community participation these organisations facilitate social capital. They could also be seen to strengthen social support networks by connecting community provision and signposting. This fits with the right to food approach which is driven not just by the impetus to solve the problem of food poverty but by the recognition that more is required, that more issues and actors are involved and there are wider drivers of poverty at work.

The findings of Chapter 7 and Chapter 6 highlight the important political role these organisations have and the way they speak into politics and policy individually, collectively and alongside stakeholder faith groups, individual donors and other interested NGOs. Through conversations with policy makers, campaigning and advocacy work and engagement with the work of high profile NGOs emergency food providers can play a proactive role in shaping the politics of food poverty.

Based on the findings of this thesis therefore it appears that whilst emergency food providers set out to alleviate food poverty, their principle contributions to the realisation of the right to food may be social and political. As emergency food provision is not able to provide adequate protection from food poverty when it occurs by a right to food standard, perhaps it has a role to play in facilitating and enabling the right to food given the socio-political contributions organisations can make. Potentially then, the most constructive contribution of emergency food charities to realising the right to food may be an enabling one - holding states accountable to their responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil the right to food through advocacy work and national campaigning and actively facilitating access to food for individuals in local communities by connecting social support networks, welfare safety nets and signposting to other services.

## **Recommendations**

To end this thesis some recommendations are offered here, on the basis of the research findings and conclusions. Recommendations are suggested for a range of stakeholders including emergency food providers, policy makers, NGOs, the food industry, local communities and individuals and researchers.

*Emergency food charities* should emphasise and focus on their social and political contribution to progressive responses to food poverty and realising the human right to food in the UK. In relation to conclusion 3 above, they could also have a role to play in the realisation of the right to food through forming a 'social movement' and drawing attention to the issue of food poverty and calling for a rights-based solution. A social movement is 'a network of associations, groups and individuals that are allied with each other through sharing a particular programme of action or sense of identity' (Scott 2001, p.112). Given the profile of the issue of hunger and endeavour of emergency food provision such a movement could have a potentially powerful voice in the current context and could help to drive a right to food agenda, drawing on advocacy and campaigning work at national and local levels.

Whether or not they form part of a wider socio-political movement, the work of individual organisations in this area could also be important. Providers could have a specifically political role to play in the realisation of the right to food through advocacy and campaigning work and, specifically, maximising the amount of work they do speaking to wider political processes and trying to shift structural determinants of food poverty (for example low income or problems with the social security system). This is a role that the Trussell Trust in particular takes on at the moment, as highlighted at various points in the thesis, so what is advocated here in the conclusion is that this role is continued and expanded.

Specifically, they should focus on:

- Their signposting work and connecting poverty services locally.
- Their advocacy and campaigning work at local, devolved and national levels.

- Being aware of the symbiotic relationship between emergency food provision and the welfare state and doing all they can not to become a permanent substitute for the (welfare) state.

*Policy makers* nationally should focus on the issue of rising use of emergency food provision and the problem of food poverty. Right to food strategies should be adopted for guiding tangible policy responses which also draw on other actors and hold them to account. Given the lack of data and understanding of the problem of food poverty (outlined in Chapter 1) and given how problematic these systems are as stand-alone responses (Chapters 4 and 5), first steps towards this should be:

- Establishing and funding a regular systematic measure of food poverty in the UK.
- Beginning a consultation on a right to food strategy, bringing in all Whitehall departments and the full range of stakeholders across civil society, government and the private sector.

*NGOs* should engage more with rights based discourses to guide campaigning and advocacy. This could be particularly constructive given that the state has yet to enact its role as duty bearer (Chapter 2 and 7) and communities and emergency food providers are busy responding to need (Chapters 4 and 6). A key challenge to this is that human rights are not very fashionable in UK policy making and governance and some prominent NGOs will use this discourse with international work but not as much in their UK work. Nonetheless, NGOs should also maintain a focus on their work holding government to account over the rise of food poverty and increasing reliance on emergency food provision. Particular recommendations for NGOs are:

- To lobby for a UK right to food strategy.
- To support emergency food providers by giving voice to the evidence they collect around levels and drivers of need.
- To hold the food industry to account, as well as the government.

*The food industry* should engage with the issue of food poverty beyond supporting food charity as part of corporate social responsibility. Emergency food provision could be seen as a symptom of an unsustainable food system (Chapter 5) so the question of what the food industry could and should do is urgent. The industry – specifically retailers – should look at fairness across their food chains and specifically:

- Look at how the structure of their retailing (planning and location of stores), pricing and offers structures impact on food poverty in the UK.
- Look at their role as employers in determining employees' experiences of food poverty in relation to zero-hour contracts and living wages particularly.

*Local communities and individuals* should, in addition to their engagement in the work of helping others in their social networks or through getting involved in an emergency food project, should join wider discussions at local authority, devolved and national policy levels around food poverty and the right to food. Finally, in exploring the vast range of questions open for exploring in this phenomenon, *researchers* should engage more fully with the right to food framework and ask questions about constructive ways forward.

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## **Appendices**

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## Appendix 1

### Glossary

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#### *Community Food Member*

A recipient of FareShare food, 'Community Food Member' (CFM), is how FareShare refers to its recipient projects. They vary significantly in types of projects (including hostels, drop in centres and lunch clubs) but to qualify to sign up as a recipient of FareShare food a project has to be helping vulnerable people and to demonstrate how it will divert the funds it would otherwise spend on food – if weren't obtaining it through FareShare - to further its work.

#### *Emergency food provision*

Food provided to people in need who would otherwise struggle to feed themselves and their dependents. For the purposes of this thesis an emphasis is placed upon charitable initiatives but it can take various forms including state supported voucher schemes (see 'food aid' below).

#### *FareShare*

One of the study's two case study organisations. FareShare redistributes surplus food – through depots across the country which operate as not for profit franchises – to charities helping vulnerable people and whose service involved the provision of food (free or subsidised).

#### *Food aid*



The UK government is increasingly referring to food aid in a domestic context. Recent research commissioned by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) defined food aid as:

‘an umbrella term encompassing a range of large-scale and small local activities aiming to help people meet food needs, often on a short-term basis during crisis or immediate difficulty; more broadly they contribute to relieving symptoms of household or individual level food insecurity and poverty.’ (Lambie-Mumford et al 2014, iv).

Food aid initiatives can include both state funded food welfare and food charity. This thesis focuses on two case studies of food charities.

### *Food bank*

The term ‘food bank’ has come to refer in the UK to projects which provide emergency parcels of food for people to take away, prepare and eat. This is a distinct use of the label compared to some other country contexts such as the United States, where the term often refers to a storage project from which local projects (sometimes called ‘food pantries’) draw food down for distribution in local communities.

### *Foodbank*

Is the registered name of the Trussell Trust initiative.

### *Food poverty*

For the purposes of this study, the definition of food poverty is drawn from Dowler et al (2001, p.2 and taken from Radimer et al 1992 cited in Riches 1997):

‘The inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so’

### *Food security*

The concept of food security differs from that of food poverty above. The FAO have defined food security as:

“Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life”.  
(World Food Summit, 1996 cited in FAO 2006)

### *Right to food*

The human right to food forms the theoretical framework of this thesis. The (at the time of writing) outgoing Special Rapporteur for the Right to Food defines the right as:

"The right to have regular, permanent and unrestricted access, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate and sufficient food corresponding to the cultural traditions of the people to which the consumer belongs, and which ensure a physical and mental, individual and collective, fulfilling and dignified life free of fear." (DeSchutter, no date)

### *Surplus food redistribution*

Is key to the work of FareShare and involves intercepting surplus from key points within the food chain – before food reaches a shop. The food is then distributed to projects providing food to people in need.

### *Trussell Trust Foodbank Network*

The second case study of the thesis. The Trussell Trust is a Christian charitable organisation that runs various initiatives including youth projects in Bulgaria, second hand furniture stores and the Foodbank Network. The Trussell Trust Foodbank Network is made up of local foodbank franchises (non for profit). The Network provides projects with support at regional and national levels as well as branding.

## Appendix 2

### Projects Visited and Interviews Undertaken

#### Projects Visited

	Trussell Trust Foodbanks	FareShare Community Food Members
<b>Sheffield</b>	Burngreave Foodbank Gleadless Valley Foodbank S6 Foodbank	[Yorkshire Depot] Archer Project Emmaus Sheffield Jubilee Food Bank Parsons Cross Initiative (not a CFM)
<b>Bristol</b>	East Bristol Foodbank North West Bristol Foodbank North Bristol Foodbank	[South West Depot] Bristol Refugee Rights Wild Goose Café Cheltenham Open Door Matthew Tree Project (not a CFM)
<b>Elsewhere</b>	Bradford Foodbank North Cotswolds Foodbank	

#### Table of interviewees

FareShare	Foodbank Network
Depot Interviewees	Interviewees from Foodbanks
FareShare South West Manager	East Bristol Foodbank Manager
FareShare South West Operations Director	North West Bristol Manager
FareShare South West Communication and Outreach Officer	North Bristol Foodbank Manager
FareShare South West Hub and Spoke Manager	S6 Foodbank Manager (Sheffield)
FareShare South West WRAP pilot manager	Burngreave Foodbank Manager (Sheffield)
FareShare Yorkshire Trustee	Gleadless Valley Foodbank Manager (Sheffield)
FareShare Yorkshire Depot Manager	North Cotswold Foodbank Manager and South West RDO

FareShare Yorkshire Operations Director	Bradford Foodbank Manager
	Bradford Foodbank Administrator
<b>CFMS</b>	<b>Regional Development Officers (RDO)</b>
Archer Project Manager (Sheffield)	Northern Ireland RDO
Archer Project Client 1 (Sheffield)	Scotland RDO
Archer Project Client 2 (Sheffield)	Wales RDO
Archer Project Head Chef (Sheffield)	North Wales RDO
Emmaus Project Manager (Sheffield)	South West RDO (as listed above)
Emmaus Companion (Sheffield)	Yorkshire RDOs
Jubilee Food Bank Manager (Sheffield)	
Jubilee Food Bank Referrer (Sheffield)	<b>National Staff</b>
Jubilee Food Bank Client (Sheffield)	Executive Chairman
Bristol Refugee Rights Chef	Foodbank Network Director
Bristol Refugee Rights Manager	Foodbank Network Manager
Wild Goose Cafe Manager (Bristol)	Corporate Partnerships Manager
Cheltenham Open Door Duty Manager (Bristol) [not audio recorded]	Head of Fundraising
<b>National Staff</b>	Operations Director
CEO	PR and Marketing Manager
Director of Food	
Director of Operations	
Depots Support Manager (Operations)	
Trustee (also Trustee of South West Depot)	
<b>Other Interviews</b>	
Parsons Cross Initiative (PXI) Manager (Sheffield)	
Matthew Tree Project Manager (Bristol)	
Steve Marriott Bristol City Council	

## Appendix 3

### List of figures, tables and graphs

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