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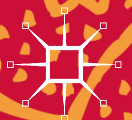
THE ECONOMICS OF EMERGENCY FOOD AID PROVISION

A Financial, Social and Cultural Perspective

Martin Caraher
Sinéad Furey



The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision

"Food Banks are modern day 'canaries' down the food mine. They are being used to give warnings yet also used to patch up food poverty. This book shows how to understand them, and why we need to redesign any food system which takes recourse to food banks."

—Tim Lang, *Professor of Food Policy, Centre for Food Policy, City, University of London*

"Food banks are a Band-Aid that we, as a society, have developed to address the social, nutritional and health inequality that results from the food options of our less advantaged citizens. The impact of food poverty on health is enormous and the gap continues to grow for those on low incomes. This important book looks at the topic through a welfare economics lens i.e. how we allocate our resources. Food banks are a poor short-term 'solution' that, it is argued, make poor sense from economic and a societal and a health and wellbeing perspective."

—Dr. Cliodhna Foley-Nolan, *Director of Human Health and Nutrition safefood*

"As governments rightly insist, national security is their first priority. Yet within the UK, The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision starkly reveals the social costs, neglected human rights and moral bankruptcy of its welfare reform policies when leaving the widespread hunger of its impoverished citizens to stigmatizing, ineffective food banking and the parallel charity economy. This is a critical and timely analysis with lessons for all affluent but austerity driven nation states."

—Graham Riches, *Emeritus Professor of Social Work, University of British Columbia, USA, and author of Food Bank Nations (2018)*

"This book documents the rise in the number of foodbanks in the United Kingdom and challenges many of the commonly held views on the major problem of food insecurity in this country. The authors examine the issue from a broad perspective that looks at the impact of welfare economics and how the global food system with its food surpluses, may be viewed as part of the problem rather than a solution. This book is essential reading for those advocating for a sustainable food secure world, which has the right to freedom from hunger at its heart."

—Dr. Elizabeth Mitchell, *Belfast Food Network, UK*

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The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision

A Financial, Social and Cultural Perspective

palgrave
macmillan

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ISBN 978-3-319-78505-9 ISBN 978-3-319-78506-6 (eBook)
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6

Library of Congress Control Number: 2018940758

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Cover illustration: Pattern adapted from an Indian cotton print produced in the 19th century

Printed on acid-free paper

This Palgrave Pivot imprint is published by the registered company Springer International Publishing AG part of Springer Nature
The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Preface

Food banks have become emblematic of modern society in the United Kingdom. The symbolism ranges from seeing indicators of caring community concern, through free food for freeloaders to failures of the state to deliver on the social agenda. Whatever your views there is little doubt of their visibility, on our streets, in our supermarkets through food drives, in the media and as a topic of conversation among politicians. This has happened in a relatively short period of time: the print media when talking about food banks up unto the mid-2000s usually had to preface or follow the term with an explanation of what they were or that they were common in countries such the United States or New Zealand. Now they stand as a metaphor for poverty in society.

There are many books on food banks; in fact, in academia there is now a sub-branch of research looking at the experiences of people in food poverty and documenting the experiences and the efficiency of a food system that delivers food for food aid. This book is not about these issues; we come from the perspective of addressing and locating food banks and the system of foodbanking within a wider framework of reference. The frame is probably best described by the term *Welfare Economics* which was coined after First World War to explore how market economics, including welfare policies, have driven the development of food banks and an offshoot of the dominant food system which deliver food surplus, waste and donations to charities.

We are indebted to the work of Elizabeth Dowler and Peter Townsend in the United Kingdom; Janet Poppendieck from the United States;

Graham Riches from Canada, and from an earlier age the work of Richard Titmuss and Seebohm Rowntree. The work of these key thinkers forms the basis of our way of looking at food charity and food banks and are referenced in the various chapters. We are but *'nanos gigantum humeris insidentes'—dwarfs standing on the shoulders of giants.* As well, we are hugely influenced and draw on the work of Olivier De Schutter, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food 2008–2014, who developed a rights critique around food banks and also located the growth of foodbanking as a consequence of global economics. A key missing ingredient in all of the research is the voice of the user, especially with respect to solutions. The voice of food bank users when reported is that of the gratified recipient of food aid. This is for us simply consulting users on their experiences and not as *experts* of food insecurity and poverty with respect to solutions. There is a growing academic industry on the lived experiences of food bank users, but little on using their voices to find solutions. Poverty and food poverty remains an indignity in a society where access to food is determined by money and there is no shortage of food. In this respect we acknowledge our debt to work of De Schutter and more recent work in Scotland on dignity and the right to food.

Food poverty and insecurity are not confined to those in receipt of welfare; a large percentage of people at risk never end up using food banks. This can be due to problems with accessibility and acceptability of food banks but also because most families and households draw on other resources before turning to a food bank or charity for help. These resources can be extended family and community, and drawing on savings or making use of credit. In terms of welfare economics, we attempt to do two things. The first is to put a social cost on the difference between a parcel of food as provided by food charities and a consensual acceptable basket of healthy appropriate food. We call this the *social cost of food aid* and this works out as a threefold difference. The second issue we attempt is to put a cost on replacing food parcels with cash alternatives, sufficient to allow financial access to a socially acceptable basket of goods. These costs, which run into hundreds of millions, are contrasted with other spending and savings in the overall welfare system. All this is by nature of the data incomplete but it begins to give an indication of the cost of restoring dignity to the recipients of welfare. The hidden costs of not doing this will be found in increasing chronic disease and mental health costs, we ask the question—*can we afford not to do this*?

There are five chapters in this edition, starting with an overview of the rise in poverty and food poverty, an examination of terms and what a food bank is alongside the various models operating in the United Kingdom. Our emphasis is on the United Kingdom but we draw on work from colleagues from the United States and Canada where there is a longer history of food banks and academic work, for example, Riches has been writing about food banks in Canada since the 1980s. We then move in the next chapter to the reasons for the increase in the number of food banks in the United Kingdom and Europe. The third chapter looks at food aid provision through charities and compares this to the cost of a consensually acceptable food basket and its cost. This is followed by a chapter using the economic data from Chapter 3 to estimate the savings to welfare budgets by referring people to food banks; all this is located within discussion on the right to food. The final chapter draws all this together and attempts to provide some pointers for the future direction of travel for food aid, food insecurity and food poverty. There is a sequence and a building on issues from one chapter to another but for work in the classroom situations individual chapters, we feel, can stand alone.

London, UK
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January 2018

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Acknowledgements/Dedications

Martin would like to thank Sinéad for bearing with him as he missed and shifted deadline after deadline, likewise to our editors at Palgrave. As usual to Maggie for her support love and companionship.

Sinéad would like to thank Martin for his continuing inspiration in all things food poverty-related. A special thank you to my mother, Frances Furey, for instilling in me her sense of social justice.

The benefits system needs to be reformed to be fair, affordable and able to reduce poverty, worklessness and welfare dependency. This will make sure people are helped to move into work while the most vulnerable get the support they need. https://www.gov.uk/government/topics/welfare.

#foodpoverty—we are not far from that 'institutionalisation' moment when the big offer will be poor-food-for-poor-people… Robbie Davison Can Cook Liverpool on Twitter.

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CHAPTER 1

The Growing Problems of Food Poverty and Insecurity

Abstract This chapter sets out the context for the rise in food poverty and the corresponding rise in the number of food banks in the UK. It provides a background to some of the key definitions and concepts used in the area such as food poverty and food insecurity. It starts with a short history of the development of food banks and then moves on to examine the issue of rising food poverty and insecurity. This is contextualised within the increases in general poverty and to changes in the UK welfare system. For those unfamiliar with the operation of food banks, a brief outline of the different types and how they work is provided. The chapter concludes with an overview of how 'governmentality' around food has shifted from the state to the charity sector.

Keywords Food poverty · Community food banks · Seven deadly 'ins'
Surplus food · Hunger

> In the same vein we must seriously examine the role of food banking, which requires that we no longer praise its growth as a sign of our generosity and charity, but instead recognize it as a symbol of our society's failure to hold government accountable for hunger, food insecurity and poverty. (Winne 2009)

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M. Caraher and S. Furey, *The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6_1

Introduction

Food banks have gained both considerable public and policy attention in the UK over the last 10 years. They have emerged as a key provider of emergency food aid for many households. In a 2001 report (Hawkes and Webster 2001), there was only one formal food bank identified in the UK, although we argue that food banks have always existed in some format or other; what is now different is the scale and reach of them or what Riches and Silavasti call '*the corporatization of food aid*' (Poppendieck 2014; Riches and Silvasti 2014b). In fact, up until 2007 reports of food banks in the media were often preceded by a description of what a food bank was and saying they were common in the United States (Wells and Caraher 2017). Now food banks have become synonymous with the new austerity and poverty in general and there is less need for newspaper or media reports to include an explanatory precursor (Wells and Caraher 2016). What is different is what we, as authors, call the business of foodbanking and how it has reached endemic proportions with most towns now having a food bank or charity outlets using waste or surplus food. Throughout this book, we will refer to Poppendieck's magisterial review of US food charity and the seven associated deadly 'ins' of food banks namely: insufficiency; inappropriateness; nutritional inadequacy; instability; inaccessibility; inefficiency and indignity (Poppendieck 1998). To this we would add inequity. At various points in the book, we refer to these concepts to show the shortcomings of food banks and food aid in general. This list acts as our audit tool against which to judge the actions of food banks and food aid.

Yet despite this newness, there is an earlier history of food banks: during the miners' strike of the mid-1980s, food banks were common; this can be seen in the film *Pride* (Warchus 2015) and by the fact that the American rock star, Bruce Springsteen, in his tour of the UK contributed money to the Durham Miners' Wives Support Group who ran community food banks in the 1980s. His contribution earned the approbation of the Conservative Member of Parliament, Piers Merchant, who said:

> "I think he was badly advised about the coal strike and the issues involved; it was an ill-judged decision," Merchant told Gavin Martin of New Musical Express. "I don't think he supports violence. The money will be going to miners who've been sacked, and they've been guilty of violence and vandalism. It's a great shame because it was great to have him

> in Newcastle." It turned out that this British version of George Will had in the past been supported by the fascist-style British National Movement and that Merchant had refused to disavow such support. (Marsh 2004)

More recent statements by Conservative politicians show support for food banks including contentions that they are the caring face of society. Jacob Rees-Moog, the MP for North East Somerset, said that he found food banks '*rather uplifting*' and that the reasons for their increased use was related to the fact that people know where they are and that staff in Jobcentre Plus offices direct and refer people to them.[1] This is a move from earlier statements from some politicians who rued that people were using food banks as the food was free and that some clients would travel miles to get something for free (Wells and Caraher 2016) or as the then Education Secretary Michael Gove said '*[T]hey've only got themselves to blame for making bad decisions*' (Chorley 2013). The context for the rise in food banks are rises in 'food poverty'. Toby Young, a well-known media commentator, suggested that food bank use '*was lower under the last Labour government because Labour refused to allow Job Centres to refer benefit claimants to food banks*' (Young 2015). So, by implication, the referral to and use of food banks are now indicators of caring concern and according to some '*shows what a compassionate country we are*' (BBC website[2]). All this seems ignorant of the stigma and humiliation attached to the use of food banks (Garthwaite 2016b; van der Horst et al. 2014). The then United Nations' Special Rapporteur on food in a talk in London said:

> Food assistance in the form of the right to social security, such as cash transfers, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights, whereas foodbanks are charity-based and depend on donations and good will. There can also be a sense of shame attached to foodbanks. (de Schutter 2013)

The growing crisis resulted in an All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) Inquiry into hunger and food bank use, which gathered and reported

[1] BBC website http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41264965, accessed 27 December 2017.

[2] BBC website http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41264965, accessed 27 December 2017.

on evidence from frontline food providers, researchers and civil society organisations over 2014 (All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Hunger and Food Poverty 2014). While the report recommended over 70 actions to address food poverty, a major focus of the report was on enhancing the redistribution of surplus food, perhaps particularly because of the simultaneous focus on awareness of this issue. Driven by the 'scandal' that both food waste and hunger could exist at the same time in the UK, six of the APPG's recommendations focused on strengthening infrastructure and systems to support the diversion of food surplus from food retailers to instead be used by charitable food providers. They wrote:

> It is in harvesting from (the surplus or wasted food) that we believe the next big breakthrough will be made in eliminating hunger in this country.

This quote reflects a widely found tendency to link the issue of insecure and insufficient food access to that of food waste/surplus, often expressed with the verdict that the joint occurrence of these problems in the same country is scandalous.

The idea of linking surplus food from the food chain with meeting the needs of marginalised groups is not new, and there are numerous examples of these practices across high-income countries, which have been supported by legislative and technological developments. One example is *Good Samaritan* legislation, which is a set of regulations limiting liability for someone who provides emergency aid to another on a voluntary basis (i.e.) food donors. Such laws are already in place in Canada and the United States (Tarasuk and Eakin 2005). In France, laws have been passed; legislating governments to require supermarkets to donate food to charity and similar developments in Italy have resulted in the introduction of similar legislation via a law known as the '*Gadda Law*' (Azzurro 2015).

Other campaigns have focused on the introduction of corporate tax credits for companies linked to the fair market value of the corporate surplus food donations made to food banks. This is already done in France and Spain (Azzurro 2015), and proposals for this legislation have been proposed by Food Banks Canada and debated in municipal councils across Canada. FareShare in the UK is proposing the establishment of a £15 million fund to compensate retailers for diverting 100,000 tonnes of food from anaerobic digestion to human consumption through food

charities; the cost being broken down as follows for a tonne of 'surplus' food: £70 for transport and storage and between £20–50 to compensate growers, the balance is labour costs including packaging/repacking the food. At present, FareShare distributes approximately 13,000 tonnes per year. An alternative proposal is to compensate food producers by providing tax credits for the costs involved in getting food to charities (Rayner 2017). The proposal is to establish a £15 million fund to compensate food producers who would otherwise send food to anaerobic digestion.

What Constitutes Food Poverty?

Here we set out the conceptual and practical issues which defined food poverty as this is the primary drive for people using food banks. All this is occurring at a time where incomes are shrivelling, the welfare state is being reformed and we are facing increases in general levels of poverty. A 2017 Institute For Fiscal Studies (IFS) report predicts that current welfare changes will result in increases in relative poverty between now and 2022 (Hood and Waters 2017). Although the government has promised that the cutbacks will not be as severe as initially planned, the IFS report predicts that £5 billion will be removed from the entitlement criteria. So, why does food poverty matter and is it not simply an outcome of wider poverty? Well yes and no: food is different from other goods and commodities in that it is both a necessity for health and a marker of social affluence as well as being, what economists call, an elastic item in the household budget.

Food poverty has been defined as '*the inability to acquire or consume an adequate quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or uncertainty that one will be able to do so*' (Radimer et al. 1990). While the many definitions of food security have a strong emphasis on access, other definitions extend this to include '*the ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways*', and '*a sustainable food system that maximizes self-reliance and social justice without resorting to emergency food sources*' (American Dietetic Association 2010). It is clear, therefore, that the ability to access food, whilst an important aspect to food security, does not fully address food insecurity. The American Dietetic Association definition, and its exclusion of emergency food sources as an appropriate source, raises issues which will reoccur through this book. It also links to the broader question Janet Poppendieck raises about how food charity undermines the basis of welfare (Poppendieck 2014).

Food in the wake of World War II (WWII) and rationing was seen as something that could be incorporated within the broader categories of welfare support and human capitals such as knowledge and skills. Dowler (2003) contends that food was not dealt with as a specific issue in the development of the welfare state and the tackling of the 'five giants' of want, squalor, ignorance, idleness and disease. The flaws in this were highlighted by Townsend in his 1979 opus on poverty in the UK (Townsend 1979). His concepts and findings harped back to an earlier era of families struggling to put food on the table, and the findings of Rowntree and Booth in York and London (Booth 1902; Rowntree 1941).

Food security, another term that is often used in this area, is defined by the World Food Summit of 1996 *as* '*when all people, at all times, have access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life*'. What becomes clear when dealing with food poverty is that the relative differences within a country also matter. So it becomes an issue not just of want and hunger but also of cultural norms and standards. If you cannot send your child on a school trip because you cannot afford the trip itself or the cost of eating out on the trip is a barrier then you might be said to be disadvantaged. The issue of food insecurity, when people do not have sufficient food to eat (or concern that they may not do so in the future), has been brought to the fore of public and policy debate as it underlies the rapid growth in use of emergency food provisioning in the UK. We deal with this in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3.

The term 'food security' originally referred to adequacy of food supply at the country population level but this is changing to embrace its consideration at the individual household level. The more common terminology in the UK is '*food poverty*', which had previously been favoured because it did not infer a food safety nuance in the same way that '*food insecurity*' perhaps does. However, the terms are becoming considered as interchangeable in the UK. A US Institute of Medicine report provides definitions of food security; high food security; low food security; food insufficiency and hunger. They (Troy et al. 2011) define very low food security as '*A range of food insecurity in which households report multiple indications of food access problems, but typically report few, if any, indications of reduced food intake on the USDA survey. Households reduced the quality, variety, and desirability of their diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted*' (p. 2.3).

Fisher (2017) raises an important point in relation to the use of the term hunger and the move to food insecurity. He argues that while food security may be easier to measure it is less emotive, and food security fails to convey the '*universally emotive power of "hunger"*' (p. 13). Poppendieck (1998) argues that even the term '*hunger*' takes away from the root causes of hunger i.e. poverty and even food insecurity does the same. For us, as authors, food insecurity suggests that the issue can be ameliorated by the provision of food at times of economic or social stress, whereas in fact the issue as Janet Poppendieck (1998) says is poverty and the fact that people eat every day. The issues of insecurity do not go away in the days that people have sufficient to eat; poverty is a slow, degrading, insidious process. For the UK, there is a long history of the use of the term food poverty and its use incorporates a political sense of urgency as well as a focus on the causes as opposed to the symptoms. Food insecurity focuses on the measurable and misses the longer and bigger impact of living in poverty. Townsend argued for the construction of a food poverty line, to address multiple dimensions of need: for food, this could be based on the minimum amount of money a household needs to purchase a basic-needs (defined in different ways) food bundle and nothing more. He proposed that if the cost of basic non-food needs is estimated, the food poverty line can be added to the non-food needs to create an overall poverty line. This costing and its relations to a social norm is something we set out in Chapter 3 when we deal with consensual food baskets.

Families living on low-incomes change their food habits (foodways) to suit their situations (Goode 2012). So families and households on restricted incomes consume food because of their poverty; they are not in (food) poverty because of their food consumption, food remains a way of rewarding yourself and indulging your family.

For both food insecurity and food poverty, a major problem is that the UK does not measure either, as is done in Canada and the United States (Tarasuk et al. 2014; Coleman-Jensen et al. 2016). Here we caution against putting all our eggs in one basket by calling for the measure of food insecurity as a solution; while this is important and necessary to measure progress, 25 years of measurement in the United States and Canada has not resulted in solutions. There needs to be a balance between measurement of the problems, devising solutions and evaluating the solutions.

There are arguments that the UK government does not want to measure food insecurity as this would highlight the existence of poverty and food poverty and furthermore, from an ideological viewpoint, many politicians do not see food poverty as an issue of income but one of lifestyle. So defining the extent of the problem and even its very existence is constantly challenged. In a report by the Food Foundation, they reported that the FAO estimated that 8.4 million (10.1%) people in Britain were living in households where the adult reported food insecurity (Taylor and Loopstra 2016). This included 4.5% (4.7 million) of adults who reported that, at least once, they went without eating for a whole day and that 10% of children in Britain are living in households affected by severe food insecurity. While these figures are based on a small sample size, they indicate that a significant proportion of the UK population faces insecure and insufficient access to food.

Results from an earlier Food Standards Agency survey, the '*Low income diet and nutrition survey*', undertaken in 2005 before the economic crisis of 2007–2012, showed that among low-income households, 39% reported having worried that their food would run out before money for more was obtained during the previous year, and a fifth reduced or skipped meals regularly because of lack of money (Nelson 2007). This research has not been repeated and we lack trend data on the existence of food insecurity and food poverty. In Northern Ireland, however, we have some more detailed research and as one of the UK's most deprived areas, it is worth looking in some depth at the data and we do this in Chapter 3 by looking at access and affordability of key foods (Hood and Waters 2017).

This edition in the Pivot series covers the broader context of food banks and foodbanking. If you want to learn about the internal workings of a food bank, go to Garthwaite (2016a, b), Poppendieck (1998) or van der Horst et al. (2014). For specific information on how some of the networks work, go to the work of Loopstra and colleagues (Loopstra et al. 2015; Loopstra and Lalor 2017; Loopstra and Tarasuk 2013). Here we attempt to set the food bank in context of wider social and economic reforms as well as exploring the business logic behind food banks and foodbanking. Food banks refer to the individual outlets used to distribute food to those in need, while foodbanking refers to the economic, business and social system underpinning charitable food aid.

How Food Banks Work and Why We See the Numbers Increasing

In the UK, the methods of operating and funding of food banks vary; there is no one overall model of operation. However, they generally rely on donations from retailers and to a lesser extent the general public (Caraher and Furey 2017; Hawkes and Webster 2001). The Trussell Trust network of food banks started by relying on donations from the public, but more and more is developing links with food retailers at the local level. So for example, a recent announcement by Tesco that all food waste/surplus from its stores will be donated to local food charities via the FareShare cloud app.[3] As demand outstrips supply food banks have to diversify their supply chains and seek wider sources of food with links to corporations and supermarkets.[4]

In everyday situations, programmes have varying practices when it comes to sourcing food and activities may overlap, so a food bank may also organise a soup or meal kitchen or even a mobile food service for the street homeless. But first of all it is important to recognise why food banks and other food aid exist and what has led to their growth. One of the authors (MC) remembers food banks in the 1970s and 1980s existing for those on the margins, so in the docks of Dublin and Liverpool sailors' charities often operated food banks and migrants who fell outside the then existing welfare system. Those working in the docklands areas were for those who could not get work or were on insecure or erratic work contracts, and so reflected the temporary nature of employment contracts, now mirrored in the modern gig-economy or zero-hour contracts. In the UK, like many post-WWII countries, the welfare system was set up to help people live lives free from want and squalor. National welfare systems were part of this as well as education, employment and housing policies (Renwick 2017). This is of course what makes the UK system different from many others; the wider welfare system includes a right to free health care at the point of delivery (Timmins 2017).

Current government reforms plan to remove £10 billion from the overall welfare budget by 2020. Public reaction and lobbying pressure have resulted in these figures being revised to £5 billion; however, the IFS reports that the changes to the current (legacy) system and the move

[3] https://www.tesco.com/community-food-connection/.

[4] See Trussell Trust network of partners https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/partner-with-us/.

to what is called Universal Credit (UC) will result in a fall of entitlements of £5.5 billion in 2021, thus leading to increases in childhood poverty and relative poverty (Hood and Waters 2017). This is not a direct budget reduction but a raising of entitlement levels and a way of saving revenue.

A problem with the way that UC is being implemented is that it makes '*partial take-up*' impossible. This has also been complicated by the removal of funds for local welfare provision through the Discretionary Social Fund, operated at a local level. This fund allowed local grants and loans to be given to those in crises, often to buy emergency food supplies. The government made £174 million available nationally (£27.2 million for London). The funding was not ring-fenced and there was no obligation on local authorities to set up local schemes nor was a duty to set them imposed on local authorities (LAs). While many LAs across the country have continued with these schemes, they have to compete locally with other funding priorities (Royston 2017). Hence, if you can send or refer someone to a food bank then that money is available for other demands. So food banks have emerged to take up this slack and to provide services previously available as a welfare right, thus enshrining the move from food as a right to food as charity provision (de Schutter 2013, 2014). This move from a rights-based approach to charity provision is important and something we shall return to later in Chapter 2. As can be seen, there are multiple forces at play: reductions and retractions in the welfare state, increases in poverty levels, higher food prices and a view of modern poverty as a lifestyle issue (Seabrook 2013; Sutton 2016).

Food Banks and Other Delivery Mechanisms of Charitable Food

The term '*food bank*' can refer to one of two types of service: 'a large redistributor, like a wholesaler, of rescued food to smaller charities that provide cooked and/or uncooked food to food insecure populations, or a service that provides grocery items directly to clients' (Bazerghi et al. 2016). A food bank can be seen as '*a centralized warehouse or clearing house registered as a non-profit organisation for the purpose of collecting, storing and distributing surplus food, free of charge, to front line agencies which provide supplementary food and meals to the hungry*' (Riches 1986). These are often called food pantries in the United States and there is no restriction like the referral, three days/three times usage common here in the UK. In Canada, where a network of food banks has been in operation

since the 1980s, a highly sophisticated system of surplus food collection and redistribution has been developed. Up to 85% of food distributed through food banks can be surplus food from large corporate food retailers and producers (Loopstra and Tarasuk 2015). These are referred to as food pantries and are not subject to the same type of appointment or limits operating in the UK. We use the term foodbanking to refer to the system of food banks and supply chains that have established to support and supply this charity system of food provision; Riches (2018) talks about this phenomena in the global north as 'Food Bank Nations'.

In the UK context, a food bank most commonly refers to the latter direct service and is operated by a range of volunteer-based organisations, these are called food pantries in the United States and Canada. Typically, in the UK, emergency food parcels consist of three to five days' worth of non-perishable food such as sugar, soup, pasta, jam and tinned products to families. The Trussell Trust, the largest and only national network of food banks in the UK, operates its food banks, via a franchise system currently standing at 400 plus food banks (each with three outlets, so total of 1200). At a local level, they recommend a system of referral from a frontline health or care professional. The Trussell Trust specifies that clients be limited to receiving a total of three consecutive referrals, after which they attempt to plug clients into other systems of support, although this depends on the scale of operation of a local food bank and the expertise available locally as most are staffed by volunteers and have limited resources at their command. In 2016/17, the Trussell Trust, the only major UK food bank network with data, supplied 1,182,954 food parcels via its network of 427 food banks (1200 outlets) (Briggs and Foord 2017). It has been noted that there are many food banks that operate independently of the Trussell Trust in the UK, which may or may not have comparable practices for referral and food distribution. The Independent Food Aid Network (IFAN) estimates that there are at least 746 independent food banks operating across the UK.[5] The number of Trussell Trust which started out as the largest entity has not grown as rapidly in the last couple of years but the demands on its existing network have increased.

Local food banks' opening hours may depend on volunteer time and availability, and many only open for a couple of hours a week. Bigger food banks may have a paid manager but the reality is that without volunteer time and donated space they could not operate (Forsey 2014).

[5] See http://www.foodaidnetwork.org.uk/mapping.

This limited opening may determine or limit access by some groups, e.g. low-pay workers or those in part-time employment. So of the 1200 operated by the Trussell Trust, some may only open for short periods of time.

The extent to which food being distributed in food banks currently comes from surplus food sources is not known. We have data from the Trussell Trust and FareShare but not from the other networks which account for approximately 50% of food banks. The Trussell Trust emphasises that most of the food they distribute is donated by members of local food banks, based on a standardised shopping list of non-perishable food. This model of supply has resulted in what has become known as *donation-based food supply chains*. In countries such as Brazil, this is formalised so that donations feed into an existing state-sponsored structure, but in the UK, this relationship remains informal (Rocha 2016). Recent partnerships with large supermarket chains suggest a direction toward recouping surplus food from these sources. Reports from independent food banks operating in the UK also illustrate instances of fresh surplus food being incorporated into emergency food parcels (Lalor 2014), although this remains the exception and not the norm. Current barriers to scaling up this practice may be the lack of facilities in many food banks to store and handle fresh produce. A typical UK food parcel includes:

- *Cereal*
- *Soup*
- *Pasta*
- *Rice*
- *Pasta sauce*
- *Beans*

- *Tinned meat*
- *Tinned vegetables*
- *Tea/coffee*
- *Tinned fruit*
- *Biscuits*

Additionally many food banks provide essential non-food items such as toiletries and hygiene products, in an attempt to help people in crisis to maintain dignity and feel human again.

Due to the nature of the storage facilities at food banks and the lack of facilities that many food banks have, these food products are typically dried, packaged and tinned goods. In fact, many food banks are now providing what are called ‘kettle food bags’ which simply require hot water to prepare the food. This is because many clients cannot afford the

energy costs necessary to preheat and use the oven, and often the options are between heating the house and/or food. Loopstra and Lalor (2017) report in their survey of Trussell Trust food bank clients that '*50% had gone without heating for over more than four days in the past 12 months*' (p. viii). The above list, while it may be adequate from a satiety perspective, misses the culturally appropriate element of food access and affordability. So why should those on reduced incomes have to eat dried and processed foods while the cultural norm is fresh and minimal processing?

There are a number of independent food banks not affiliated to the Trussell Trust, some small and operating out of church or community halls and some bigger and with their own resources. Such models of operation assume staff have the skills and facilities exist to handle perishable foods. One example of a bigger operation is the Oxford Food Bank which redistributes mostly fresh food to local organisations that provide cooked meals to their clientele, but also to organisations that give away food parcels (Lalor 2014). Another is SUFRA which operates a non-denominational community model and according to its website is a '*Community Food Bank & Kitchen, based in the London Borough of Brent, which aims to support disadvantaged families suffering food poverty in the local area*'.[6] SUFRA runs additional services alongside its food provision and describes its model of operation as follows '*Although we live in a welfare state, there are so many things that can go wrong leaving no money for food. In those moments of crisis we are here to help. We don't encourage dependency – we provide a maximum of four weeks' support in a year, but alongside our other services, we try to get people back on their feet.*'

The other major player in the area of food aid is FareShare. This organisation collects and redistributes food from the food industry in the UK, and estimated that in 2015 they saved 10,795 tonnes of food from landfill and redistributed to 4,652 meal programmes in 2015 resulting in 21.9 million meals being provided to those in need.[7] We tend to think of them as a wholesale food bank (Fig. 1.1).

FareShare was originally set up as an industry-led NGO to use surplus food from the food sector. Its primary focus was the use and redistribution of surplus food. Its establishment was inspired by the CEO of the Institute of Grocery Distribution, John Beaumont, who advised the then Conservative Government on food poverty as a member of the

[6] See http://www.sufra-nwlondon.org.uk, accessed 29 December 2017.

[7] See http://www.fareshare.org.uk/about-us/.

Fig. 1.1 Screen shot of Tweet

Low Income Project Team of the Nutrition Taskforce (Beaumont et al. 1995). As a result of his activity and industry links, the homeless charity Crisis established Crisis FareShare, co-founded with Sainsbury's. It is the UK's longest running food redistribution charity. The original vision was born out of the belief that no good food should go to waste, when people are going hungry. This belief is as central to its work now as it was 23 years ago. However, the focus is now on addressing hunger and creating the impression that the use of surplus food can address long-term food poverty. A screen copy of a Tweet from a social activist and entrepreneur in Liverpool questions the basis of the operation of FareShare; see ringed part of the tweet, which questions their claims to have primarily a food waste focus and not to claim an answer to hunger. More recent direct links with the food industry such as an alliance with Coca Cola at Christmas 2016 highlights what has been called the '*Hunger Industrial Complex*' (Fisher 2017). This sets out increasing links between the food-banking food system and the formal system which goes beyond the donation of surplus or waste food where customers are encouraged to buy a product with the promise that a donation will be made to the food aid charity. This goes beyond the current accepted practices of accepting donated food to more formal links which compromises issues of public health advocacy (see Chapter 3 in Fisher 2017).

FareShare reports:

> We save good food destined for waste and send it to over 6723 charities and community groups who transform it into nutritious meals for vulnerable people, from homeless hostels and day centres for older people to women's refuges and children's breakfast clubs.

Based on a survey of FareShare's Community Food Members (CFMs), the average saving to each organisation receiving food is £7900, which—the argument goes—allows these organisations to spend money on their core functions and services to the tune of £2.3 million in areas such as recreational activities for clients, training and general overheads (FareShare 2017). Some interesting findings from the NatCen survey include the following: 19% said they would '*definitely or probably*' have to close; 25% reported that they would have to cut down on core-services and 12% reported they might have to reduce staff numbers. The savings to the voluntary sector are clear and the use of surplus food and its diversion from landfill (13,000 tones diverted in 2015) is to be welcomed. What is less welcoming are the claims to be addressing hunger.

Other Models of Food Provision

Another model, midway between a food bank and direct provision of meals is one operated by *FoodCycle* which uses '*surplus food, volunteers and spare kitchen spaces to create nutritious three-course meals for people at risk of food poverty and social isolation*' (see http://foodcycle.org.uk). Such models of operation assume staff have the skills and facilities exist to handle perishable foods.

Social supermarkets source some free surplus food and consumer products that are still fit for human consumption but are no longer of saleable quality from the retail sector, and sell them to customers who are people living in poverty or at risk of poverty (Holweg et al. 2010). Across high-income countries, these supermarket models are less common, but similar models exist in France, Austria and Belgium. The French State, unlike other European models, has embedded food aid in a relationship with the agricultural sector and through a modified retail sector (de Labarre et al. 2016). The state, through social supermarkets, aims to reconnect agriculture with food aid on the basis of a model based on mutual self-interest.

In social supermarkets, products are sold at significantly reduced prices thus reducing the proportion of household budget needed to be spent on food for low-income households. Where food costs can be up to 20% of low-income households' budgets, this lowering of food spend can potentially significantly reduce financial strain. Many social supermarkets follow a membership model, for example, those in receipt of means-tested benefits or living in the area for a limited time period. These two factors are meant, respectively, to deal with the problem of dependency and not creating another business at a local level that might jeopardise other local businesses. One example of such a model in the UK is the Community Shop, a shop where surplus food is offered for sale at greatly reduced prices to members.[8] Community Shop is the social arm of a commercial enterprise called Company Shop, which has a network of staff shops, stores and '*click and collect*' services, providing food at reduced costs to members who work in the food manufacturing industry and emergency services. At the moment, there is a lot of confusion over the approach and many do not realise that the Community Shop model is a franchise. The impact of these initiatives on food security and poverty are not yet clear as the development of such enterprises is at an early stage. Variations on the model are being explored in Northern Ireland and Scotland and by a number of local authorities, so we are likely to see more of this type of outlet. Like food banks, the food that reaches the shelves of a social supermarket may fail many of Poppendieck's (1998) '*seven deadly ins*', it may be inappropriate in size and timing (e.g. catering packs, Christmas foods often appear in the new year), represent an instability of supply and be nutritionally inadequate.

Lastly, a number of organisations, ranging from soup kitchens to community meal programmes, may receive surplus food to supplement the ingredients for meals they prepare for individuals and families. Many of these receive their food from FareShare, mentioned above. Similar to food banks, there is wide variation in the forms these programmes take. For these organisations, surplus food reduces the amount they have to expenditure on food purchases, enabling them to focus more of their resources elsewhere, but again, the extent to which surplus food is used across these agencies is not known.

[8] See http://www.community-shop.co.uk, accessed 28 January 2018

So What Is the Link Between the Retreating State and Food Banks?

As the economy shrinks and the welfare state pulls back with reductions in child welfare and other benefits, there are reports of families going without food and of increasing lines of clients at 'food banks' and other charitable outlets. While this is to be commended as a service, it does raise questions of appropriateness, the impact of food poverty and the rights of those citizens who are at risk. The focus of this Pivot edition is on foodbanking as a system of food delivery either as food aid or welfare and the tensions this introduces to the provision of welfare (Dowler 2014).

There is a body of work examining the mechanics and efficiency of operation of food banks and their contribution to nutrient health outcomes (Lambie-Mumford 2017). Tarasuk and Beaton (1999) and Riches (2002) contend that the use of food banks is indicative of household food poverty but also caution that the indicator is in fact the tip of the iceberg and hides 'others' in poverty who for whatever reason do not access food banks. A recent report from Loopstra and Lalor (2017) found that the main users of the Trussell Trust network were those from groups who have been most affected by recent welfare reforms and the move to a new system called Universal Credit (UC). Due to the way the new system of UC is being rolled out, individuals end up being sanctioned for various breaches of the regulations; this results in many households facing unsteady and/or financial ups and downs (Royston 2017; Armstrong 2017; Hills 2017).

While this may be true, there remain unanswered questions as to the abilities and appropriateness of these outlets to tackle food poverty in the long term and as to their ability to contribute healthy food even in the short term, given the reliance of their sourcing on donations and surplus food stocks. This wider issue of foodbanking and links to the food industry and the model of growth operated by them are contentious and fall between difficult issues such as addressing hunger with waste or surplus food and those of the rights of citizens to an appropriate food supply.

We examine in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 the impact of changes in welfare provision and the retracting state as well as shrinkages in household incomes. The remaining chapters in this Pivot book on food banks seeks to set out an alternative way of viewing food banks and draws on business theory (enterprises), social sciences and a rights-based

approach. Much has been written about food banks, anthropologically (Garthwaite et al. 2015; Poppendieck 1998), efficiency of food supply chains (Baglioni et al. 2017), the food and the nutrition offer of food aid charities, social stigma (Garratt 2017; Purdam et al. 2016) and the role of food charity *vis à vis* state welfare (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014; Royston 2017).

A key problem is the lack of joined-up thinking and relationship between various food safety provisions. For example, prior to the introduction of Universal Infant Free School Meals in England and Scotland in 2014–2015, 1.7 million children in the UK were eligible for free school meals (Royston 2017). Of the 3.9 million children living in poverty, many were either not claiming or not eligible for free school meals. Consequently, it is logical to assume that there are substantial numbers of children who are experiencing or at serious risk of experiencing food insecurity that do not receive any support through existing mechanisms.

All this is driven by the philosophy of a low-tax, low welfare economy where the welfare system is not about protecting welfare and health but moving people to seek work (Hills 2017; Royston 2017). These issues are further developed in Chapter 2.

Conclusions

We summarise key issues arising from this first Chapter under nine points or issues, some have been dealt with in this first chapter others will be dealt with in more detail in the remaining chapters. These we see as challenges for you as the reader to hold in your mind as you critically appraise the rest of the book. The **first** issue relates to claims that waste/surplus is a solution to problems; at least in the eyes of some, this is a false claim and leads to indignity, and can lead to increases in inequality and a loss of dignity (Caraher and Furey 2017). The **second** issue we would like to draw out is that food charity has become acceptable alongside a loss of or decline in the state as the key provider of '*greater good*', as charity and philanthropic provision grows and that this leads onto issue number **three** which are changes in regulation from government to governmentality by the charity sector (Briggs and Foord 2017; Riches and Silvasti 2014b). This withdrawal of the state from welfare leads to issue number **four**—the re-establishment of the deserving and undeserving poor, as food is not a right. This can result in more indignity and inequity (de Schutter 2013; Sutton 2016).

The next two issues relate to the models of operation of food banks. Models of operation of food charity highlight the '*business model*' of food charities (Fisher 2017; Riches and Silvasti 2014a; Ronson and Caraher 2016) which depends on more surplus/waste food and the move to charity with a reliance on unpaid volunteers as the basis of operation; this is an issue we pick up again in Chapter 3. So issue number **five** relates to the underlying business model of organisations involved in food charity and the use of waste/surplus food; they have a vested interest in more waste, based on their business model. This leads to a tendency to 'shaming' or putting increased pressure on the retail and hospitality industries by sections of the foodbanking movement to deliver more as food waste is reduced (Ronson and Caraher 2016; Caraher and Furey 2017). What has happened is that technology has had two effects: firstly, less food waste in the system; and secondly, technology now enables more efficient identification, sourcing and use of smaller amounts e.g. apps such as Food Cloud. So, the proposal from the UK Waste and Resources Action Programme (WRAP) is that the amount of food to human redistribution will double in the next two years, so smaller amounts will become available but technology will introduce new efficiencies and logistics.

Sixthly, food banks develop new schemes which result in 'pilot-itis' as issues are tested through charity provision as opposed to comprehensive welfare protection (this has a link or relationship to point number three above which is the shift from government to governmentality by charity). The final three points relate to broader issues of advocacy and public health. The links that some food charities develop with the food industry compromises their advocacy roles (e.g. FareShare and Coca Cola) alongside point number **eight** a lack of a clear public health focus (Fisher 2017). Finally, delivery of food aid does little to tackle the underlying causes of food poverty and insecurity, at best it helps about one or two out of the ten who are food insecure—the proverbial tip of the iceberg (Loopstra and Lalor 2017; Taylor and Loopstra 2016). The tip of the iceberg not just in terms of those accessing food banks but the geographical spread of food banks with rural areas having less coverage (Forsey 2014) and opening times with many small food banks operating limited hours.

The invisibility of those in food poverty reinforced by the lack of measurement and consensus is countered by the high visibility of food banks in the media (Wells and Caraher 2014, 2017). Food banks have

become the new face of caring concern to the extent that the then British Prime Minister, David Cameron, when asked if he had visited a food bank hastily arranged a visit to one in his constituency that same week (Wells and Caraher 2017) as it fitted with his new model of the 'Big Society'.

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CHAPTER 2

Title Growth of Food Banks in the UK (and Europe): Leftover Food for Leftover People

Abstract This chapter sets out some of the reasons for the expansion and growth of food banks and food charity. The background is the global economic crisis and the retreat of welfare states in pursuit of 'low tax, low welfare economies'. This is linked to the portrayal of welfare recipients and the depoliticisation of hunger in favour of individual behavioural explanations. It locates hunger not just as a physical entity but one that is rooted in social and cultural norms and sets up the concept of the 'new hunger'. The ways that food charities operate which were set out in Chapter 1 are critically examined as successful failures. Finally, we introduce the concept of the 'right to food' and the legal ways in which this might be realised.

Keywords Food charity · New hunger · Depoliticisation of hunger
Consensual food basket · Food insecurity

> *Why are you talking about food banks existing, if you don't talk about why they exist? It's like pouring water into a boat that's leaking. There's no point in me giving the information about what we need to do to help, when you're not talking about the root cause of it.* Hayley Squires star of the film '*I Daniel Blake*' in an interview in the Observer Magazine. (Nicholson 2017, p. 16)

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M. Caraher and S. Furey, *The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6_2

Introduction: Growth and Expansion of Food Banks and Welfare Reform

Globally, we have seen a rise in food banks from Portugal to Brazil, Israel to Dubai. Riches and Silvasti (2014) document some of this in their book *First World Hunger Revisited*. Countries with a long history of food banks or food pantries such as the United States, New Zealand and Canada have been joined by newcomers such as Germany and Brazil (Rocha 2016). The Tafel movement in Germany has arisen as a result of changes in welfare provision (Lorenz 2012a, b). Brazil has two forms of food banks: one charity-based and one state-supported (Rocha 2016) but both are supposed to meet minimum standards for nutrition and sourcing. On the European continent, the European Federation of Food Banks (FEBA, the Fédération Européenne des Banques Alimentaires) working across 23 countries with 37,200 partner charitable organisations was responsible for 2.9 million meals every day (535,000 tons of food) through 16,440 people of whom 90% were volunteers (Baglioni et al. 2017). At the same time, other models exit such as community supermarkets and social solidarity stores (Andes 2016; Fusions 2015; Renobales et al. 2015). Across Europe, there has been a growth in food banks and charity provision of food: in Greece, Germany, Portugal, France, Hungary, the UK and many others. It is clear that welfare cutbacks and the new austerity are the drivers of food bank usage.

All this is not to say that the need was not there previously but that food banks expose to public view the need. Some of this has been driven by the differing Catholic versus Protestant ethics of self-help and food. In the Nordic countries, the development of food aid has been slower than elsewhere, why is this? Salonen (2016) says of her research in Finland that:

> The findings demonstrate that food charity has a limited ability to answer the social and material needs of the clients. The additional religious support that some of these organizations offered provided added value for some of the food recipients, but also caused tensions. (p. 8)

The tensions mentioned above include the stigma of receiving food aid and the feeling of receiving charity where there is no shortage of food (Garthwaite 2016). However even in Finland the foundations for the development of food banks were already set as food assistance

differed from other models of providing welfare, with parishes and religious organisations acting as social service providers. Especially, in rural areas, organisations entered into contract agreements with public agencies. This allowed the development of systems based on 'voluntariness' and the appearance of delivery by religious organisations, all of which is contrary to public welfare and does not spring from any legal responsibilities of the food providers or legal rights of the food recipients. As with other countries, as public service budgets are squeezed, charities step into the breach to deliver short-term help; of course, for many this shorter term has no end. Consequently, social movements across Europe around food welfare have been overtaken by charity responses like aid through food banks (Riches and Silvasti 2014). This is one of the reasons why food is different and/or can be distinguished from other forms of welfare; the whole social role of food as means of giving and receiving of food makes it more amenable to charity responses. This is true for the giver as they can rationalise their response at two levels, firstly food is a necessity and secondly they are not giving money which may be spent on non-necessities (Cameron 2014; Caraher 2011).

The current diversity of charitable and volunteer provision also raises concerns about its contribution to further dismantling of the UK welfare state and the greater good enshrined in the establishment of the NHS and broader welfare services (Timmins 2017; Renwick 2017). All this was informed by the Beveridge Report of 1942 and its enshrinement post-WWII, in tackling the five giants of squalor, want, idleness, ignorance and disease (Timmins 2017; Renwick 2017). This situation across Europe was based on what Titmuss (1970) called the '*gift relationship*'. The French system of 'solidarité sociale' for social insurance after the Second World War was conceived as a way of healing the ruptures caused by the war (Chamberlayne 1992). These approaches assume a 'common good' where even those who don't benefit experience a social benefit from contributing i.e. the alleviation of poverty is good for all. The current debates can exclude this perspective portraying those on benefits as 'scroungers', presenting narratives of those on benefits as abusing the system (Wells and Caraher 2014).

At that time of great uncertainty, the UK welfare system was set up to direct resources towards those who needed them most (Titmuss 1968; Timmins 2017). This was to counter the older UK Victorian principle which was based on the 'scientific principles' of diet and work; so diet was built on the minimum for survival and outdoor relief or work was

calculated on the Speenhamland principle of subsistence; so the rates for pay of outdoor relief were set below the lowest agricultural wage, ironically encouraging pauperism rather than preventing it as employers set wages low to reflect the market (Seabrook 2013). The WWII welfare system was set up to address these deficiencies and to address inequalities. Timmins (2017) in his analysis of the 'Five Giants' (want, squalor, idleness, ignorance and disease) documents the changing language used from social security to welfare, creating an impression that social security is the same as welfare. In fact, as we will see below, the welfare element is a small part of the overall social security budget. The other destructive implication of such portrayals is that poverty equals those on welfare (scroungers), whereas in fact the majority of the poor are in work, albeit poorly paid and lacking security of employment. All this is not helped by public pronouncements from celebrities such as Jamie Oliver and Alex James claiming that poverty is a matter of laziness and a lack of a willingness or an ability to cook, see the two quotes below:

> It's the cheapest form of luxury you'll ever get. The thing that stops people eating well is lack of knowledge, not money. ….. Nowadays, food is so cheap. Even if you're on the dole, you can eat like a king - but you need the knowledge. –Alex James, member of rock band Blur and cheese maker.[1]

> I'm not judgmental, but I've spent a lot of time in poor communities, and I find it quite hard to talk about modern-day poverty. You might remember that scene in [a previous series] Ministry of Food, with the mum and the kid eating chips and cheese out of Styrofoam containers, and behind them is a massive fucking TV. It just didn't weigh up. The fascinating thing for me is that seven times out of ten, the poorest families in this country choose the most expensive way to hydrate and feed their families. The ready meals, the convenience foods.

Jamie Oliver celebrity chef and Social entrepreneur quoted in the Guardian in an interview with Jason Deans, 2013, accessed 15 December 2017.[2]

[1] Available on http://www.newstatesman.com/music/2011/06/interview-food-cheese-nice, accessed 15 December 2017, Lewis-Hasteley (2011).

[2] Available on http://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2013/aug/27/jamie-oliver-chips-cheese-modern-day-poverty.

All of this is linked to the argument put forward by Bradshaw and colleagues (2008) that the general public and even politicians overestimate what benefit levels are and the ability of people to cope on benefits (Toynbee 2003), we address this in Chapter 3 through the development of a consensual food basket. In summary, there is a loss of the concept of the greater good and the ability to view those less well off than ourselves as deserving of help via state taxation and redistribution. This had led to viewing poverty not as the result of structural determinants but a failure of lifestyle and moral practices.

This portrayal of poverty as an individual failing and a lack of 'get-up and go' plays into the hands of the political right where welfare is seen as a trap, encouraging cycles of poverty and dependence (Wells and Caraher 2014). In fact, there is little evidence to support this view; the weight of the evidence suggests that it is a means of lifting families out of poverty especially when the broader aspects of welfare are included, such as health and education services (Marmot 2015; Hills 2017).

A New Concept of Hunger and Want

A 2017 Food Standards Agency report showed that 17% of adults worry about their food supplies running out before they have enough money to buy more, and that 8% of adults have had to eat less, experienced hunger, or at worst, gone whole days without eating because they lack money for food. Seventy-nine per cent reported living in highly food secure households, 13% lived in marginally food secure households and 8% lived in low or very low food secure households (food insecure). But, 43% of respondents reported making at least one change in their buying or eating arrangements in the last 12 months for financial reasons, possibly to do with awareness of rising food prices; this can be seen in the earlier example of cut backs in eating out among middle-income consumers. Women were more likely to live in food insecure households than men (10% compared with 6%) and, of course, we know that women, especially mothers, are likely to go without in order that others eat: see that scene in the film '*I Daniel Blake*' where the character, played by Hayley Squires, gorges on a tin of cold beans in the food bank after not having had enough to eat. We need to remember that the data are not comprehensive with at least 1.3 million missing from official UK censuses, and these are likely to be the most disadvantaged (Carr-Hill 2014).

Hunger in today's society is not just physical but also social, partaking in the cultural meanings of food requires money and resources, food is *what* we are and our food choices signify *who* we are. Food and meal-times are imbued with social and cultural meaning (Lang 1997). This aspect of the '*social appetite*' is not well understood and often used to stigmatise and victim blame those on low incomes with poor diets: if only they would eat cheap cuts of meat, plan in advance, healthy diets are no more expensive than unhealthy ones, etc. are the oft-heard refrains (Wells and Caraher 2014, 2017). This fails to recognise that the strategies adopted towards food are often ways of addressing wider poverty and that poverty is not just something that happens this week but is a constant grind and challenge to managing a budget and meeting the needs and food preferences of family members. We explore this further in Chapter 3.

People avoid hunger by reducing food expenditure and shifting towards lower quality diets with more energy dense foods and, as a last resort, turn to emergency food aid providers such as food banks or mothers go without to feed families. Goode (2012) shows how families living on low-incomes change their food habits from buying to and consumption to suit their circumstances. So, culinary and cultural capital becomes subservient to financial capital. This can vary from what we call '*holiday hunger*' (children going without during school holiday periods) through not having enough to give to visitors to not entertaining due to embarrassment over the lack of food to offer. The point is that such changes in consumption and dietary intake are not merely the consequence of individual lifestyle choices but of structural changes in financial resources.

It is also important to distinguish the public and private faces of food consumption. During the global recession of 2007–2012, those on low incomes continued to 'eat out' albeit from premises at the lower end of the market; the numbers of middle-income groups eating out dropped as food prices increased as the establishments they ate from had to increase their prices in line with inflation. The former served energy dense food and kept prices low, families continued to buy from these premises as a way of conserving spending on energy and to fill-up family members since energy dense food is filling (Caraher 2011)!

Being poor also determines the (poor) quality of diets and the consumption of energy dense food. As food prices increase, food is the 'elastic item' in the budget. You can compromise and trade down, often with health consequences, but for most people in straitened circumstances,

the key issue is hunger and particularly not seeing your children go hungry. Unfortunately, the energy dense food that wards off hunger has long-term, negative health consequences. This is one reason why food insecurity and obesity are interlinked.

Food Bank Numbers Increase

The reasons for the increase in the numbers of food banks are often cited as a meeting of the dichotomies of caring concern and rising need; however, we need to question how contributing to a food charity leads to a fairer society? This includes volunteering time, donated food and or food redirected from going to landfill to human consumption. People should not have to depend on charity for the basics. The politicisation of food donation and food banks can be seen as short-sighted and lack a political nous; it can lead to a de-politicisation of food poverty and hunger, and suggests that charity can solve the problem.

As we noted in Chapter 1, there are over 1,100 food banks in the UK, 700 independent and 400 (with an average of three outlets per food bank) plus run by the Trussell Trust network.

Working Models

A key critique is that food banks can be classified as '*successful failures*' (Ronson and Caraher 2016). Successful because they continue to grow and expand, failures as Lorenz (2012a, b) argues, because such initiatives distract from the underlying issues of food insecurity. This is based on the work of Seibel (1996) who argued that there are some problems that are both inevitable and unsolvable, although highly visible. Involvement of civic society can thus be celebrated by politicians and the public alike, thankful that well-meaning others are addressing difficult issues if not solving the underlying determinants that lead to such problems.

Systems that encourage the use of waste and surplus food, including donations, exacerbate exclusion and excess rather than overcome them, as they do not ultimately address the underlying socio-economic causes. Riches and Silvasti have called nations that use food banks and donations as a major provider to the poor "*food bank nations*". Lorenz further argues (2012a, b) that a model based around food banks and other charitable food distribution does not in the long term avoid food waste as such a model of operation is based on more disposable waste and surplus

food in the system, driven by supply not demand. Additionally, such approaches run the danger of addressing a problem that has deeper roots with a short-term Band Aid. Many argue that food security can only be addressed by governments guaranteeing their citizens a standard of living, which includes a right to food (Riches and Silvasti 2014).

Volunteer time is key to the operation of food banks; for many, this is their strength but also their weakness. By way of an example, the estimated size of the Voluntary and Community Sector workforce in Northern Ireland is 44,703, while the Northern Ireland Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector comprises an estimated 241,264 volunteers. In other words, for every volunteer, there is 1.19 members of the paid workforce; for every paid member of the workforce, there are 5.4 volunteers. Volunteers are considered as indispensable human capital and the lifeblood in the operation of food banks (do Paço and Agostinho 2012). Estimates as to the ratio of volunteers to paid staff are 10 volunteers for every one paid member of staff.[3] This makes the services provided vulnerable to volunteer fatigue but also to variations in delivery of service. Again many of Poppendieck's (1998) 7 deadly 'ins' can be seen to apply here.

Claims to using food that would otherwise go to waste and feeding the hungry have become a mantra of many food banks and of FareShare (2018). Andy Fisher (2017) in his review of the links between the food industries and the food bank movement shows close links between the food industry and food banks. Recent developments in the UK, such as the link between FareShare and Coca Cola, show the UK heading in a similar direction and assertions to be addressing hunger are manifest on the claims of many food redistribution charities. Not only does FareShare rely on donations from the food industry, but they now partner with retailers to arrange food drives to encourage customers to donate food. So the model of only using food waste or surplus is not in fact the whole picture. Lambie-Mumford and colleagues (2014) in their description of the operations of FareShare point out that the agencies that FareShare provides to are at the mercy of the corporate donations and the relations between these community food members (CFMs) and FareShare is a fragile one, dependent on relationships at a number of different levels and subject to variability in supply and a lack of supply sustainability. A point reiterated by Caraher and Furey (2017) and underlined by the additional problem of linking of food waste with food charity.

[3] See http://www.nicva.org/stateofthesector/volunteers.

Table 2.1 Based on Poppendieck's seven deadly 'ins'

The seven 'ins'+inequity	*How they manifest*	
	Trussell trust	*FareShare*
Insufficiency	Depends on donations from local people, not related to demand but supply-driven	Depend on surplus from the food industry, not related to demand but supply-driven
	Location across the country and in cities/towns and rural areas	
	Access by users including physical and temporal	
Inappropriateness	Charity to people and dependency on food donations	Reliance of food aid charities on what is available that week and many find it necessary to source food from elsewhere
Nutritional inadequacy	Inconsistency of supply makes it hard to plan for a healthy intake or food basket of goods	
Instability	Reliance on food donations whether local food donations or from the food industry	
Inaccessibility	Location of food banks	Assumes that the charities supplying food through luncheon clubs, etc. are meeting the need
Inefficiency	Redistribution of charitable food donations/surplus food is unsustainable and does not address the underlying causes of food poverty	
Indignity	Associated stigma of receiving charitable food aid as opposed to the right to food choice in a socially acceptable way	
Inequity	Feeding people versus providing people with the means to feed themselves	
	Gatekeepers control access to the system	

Poppendieck's (1998) seven 'ins' can be applied to the foodbanking models whether run by a group such as the Trussell Trust, FareShare or other type of charity provision, Table 2.1 shows this.

Presenting the problem of hunger as 'simple' is misleading and contributes to impressions of the issue being one of food lack and not the wider issue of food poverty. In one sense, the move towards food insecurity as a measure and a replacement for food poverty hastens this process and distracts from the unpleasant aspects of living in poverty. Additionally, it focuses on treating the symptoms not the cause. See the discussion in Chapter 1 on food poverty and food insecurity.

All this might seem curmudgeonly at a time when people are going hungry and as Neil Cooper, director of Church Action on Poverty (CAP), said that while he accepts that charity food is never ideal, neither is life on a low income:

> [T]he ultimate solution is that people have enough money to buy the same food as everyone else. But people's incomes aren't going up dramatically or even at all. So we need to find solutions that enable people's budgets to go further. (Butler 2017)

But allied to this there is a need to look to the long-term and ensure that future generations do not suffer from food poverty. Key to this is the right to food and it is in this respect that food is an ethical issue with underpinning social justice implications (Furey et al. 1999).

Leftover Food for Leftover People: A New Social Divide!

The dominant arguments at the moment relate not to tackling the underlying causes of food poverty but are linked to debates about the use of surplus and waste food in the food system and its diversion to human consumption rather than to landfill (Caraher and Furey 2017). Closely linked to this debate are examples from France and Italy where laws have been passed requiring supermarkets to supply food aid charities with surplus/waste food (Caraher and Furey 2017). As Professor Elizabeth Dowler of Warwick termed it: '*leftover food for leftover people*'. This is the social hunger/appetite aspect of providing already disadvantaged groups with nutritionally poor, financially reduced and culturally cheap, socially inappropriate and devalued food. There are also arguments against the setting up of food banks in that the model is self-perpetuating and does little to address waste in the food system (Riches and Silvesti 2014). If, as one of the food bank charities proclaim, their aim is to have a food bank in every town then the model relies on having waste and surplus food in the system, this does little to tackle the complex twin issues of food waste and food poverty. Others have dealt with this issue in more detail (Lorenz 2012a, b; Caraher and Furey 2017). Here we are not asserting that supply drives demand but that supply (more food banks or charity provision) merely highlights an existing or unmet need. In the early stages of the development of food banks in the UK, there

were arguments from the right of the political spectrum that it was not that people were hungry or food insecure but that the provision of 'free' food was for many too good an opportunity to pass up. This narrative was replaced or superseded by one which emphasised that the previous Labour government had failed to highlight the existence of food banks and that now those in receipt of welfare were being referred to food banks for help! And more latterly, we end with the view that food banks are uplifting as described in Chapter 1.[4]

The investment in food banks and food charity by faith-based and secular charities risks creating other divides in our society. Increasing numbers of Muslim food banks have been set up, driven by two issues. There is some concern over the provision of food via a Christian charity such as the Trussell Trust and issues of proselytising and lack of appropriate foods both culturally and Halal approved (Caraher personal correspondence). There is as well a link to broader beliefs around 'zakat' a mainstay of Islam that entails the obligatory giving of a proportion of one's wealth, especially during Ramadan (O'Toole 2014). Many Muslim charities distribute food to all who are in need. But the point remains that faith-based delivery of food aid is charity focused and often aimed at members of those faiths. It is also introducing a new element of governance as it shows a shift from the state to charities and non-governmental organisations as the providers of welfare.

While it is laudable that communities and faith communities help their members, it is important to remember that such developments can reinforce the retreat of the state from welfare provision. Charities serving their members can be seen as fine and noble but the right to food is a societal one and one enshrined in human rights legislation. Food banks can undermine the state's obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food. They are meeting a new hunger—itself a complicated concept which gives rise to much political and popular media murmurings about the '*deserving poor*' and the '*undeserving poor*'. Studies of food bank users provide a sobering reminder of the indignity of poverty and how distribution channels of emergency food aid and the fundamental right to food are important. The accounts of users of food banks reveal feelings of being a victim; shame and gratitude are the emotional rules of the encounter. What is often not appreciated is the stigma attached to seeking help and the admission that you cannot feed your family

[4] See BBC website http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-41264965.

(van der Horst et al. 2014). This is reflected by Tarasuk and Beaton (1999, p. 112) who found that of 84% of the Canadian women food bank users they surveyed '*described feeling shame, embarrassment, degradation, and humiliation at their first visit*'. While recognising the role of volunteers and food banks in filling gaps, all this is happening within a paradox that these debates are occurring at a time when there are no real problems with the overall amount of food in the UK. There is enough food, but access and the right to that food are the issues (Teron and Tarasuk 1999; van der Horst et al. 2014; Tarasuk and Eakin 2005; Salonen 2016).

The 'Right to Food'

Smith (2013) talks about the war of ideas, and it is clear that the dominant idea being promoted at the moment by both the emergency food aid movement and some politicians are that food banks and other food aid services are the answer to the complex problem of food insecurity through the use of surplus and waste food. Above we identified food banks as successful failures—successful because they continue to survive and grow; failures because they do not demonstrate any impact on food insecurity or reductions in waste (Ronson and Caraher 2016; Caraher and Furey 2017).

This war of ideas comprises the normative (political and cultural) approaches battling the rational (evidenced-based) approaches to the problem. Of course, it is hard to argue that food banks are not the solution, in the face of organisations, people and volunteers doing good by supplying food to hungry families and people in want. In contrast, in Canada, where a network of food banks has been in operation since the 1980s, a highly sophisticated system of surplus food collection and redistribution has been developed: up to 85% of food distributed through food banks can be surplus food from large corporate food retailers and producers.

A key voice missing here is the voice of the user (Wells and Caraher 2014, 2017), and the legal process may be one way of getting these voices heard. Organisations, academics and officials talk on behalf of users. This is unlike the Witness to Hunger Program in the United States where the voices of those on welfare and on the receiving end of benefits are to the forefront and viewed as the experts on food insecurity.[5] As we noted in the preface, consulting people on their experiences of

[5] http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/our-projects/witnesses-hunger, accessed 8 January 2018.

food banks is not a route to a solution. The issue for us is not simply consulting users on their experiences but looking to them as '*experts*' of food insecurity and poverty with respect to solutions. This is where their voices are not being heard or listened to. A key framing issue is that of the right to food and this can provide a way to locate debates and solutions. The global context to the right is food is set out below along with some implications for the UK.

The context to the right to food can be located in the post-WWII developments of social solidarity in nation states. Post-WWII governments, in Europe, adopted taxation policies to help rebuild damaged economies and create welfare systems that offered a safety net for those less well off; as noted above the French system of '*solidarite sociale*' for social insurance after the Second World War was conceived as a way of healing the ruptures caused by the war. At the same time, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR 1948) in Article 25 enshrined the right to food, which states:

> 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.
>
> Motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children, whether born in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same social protection. (Waterstones: Amnesty International UK 2013)

It is important to note that the UNDHR is *not* legally binding. It sets out basic norms and standards to which all countries are expected to adhere. It has been followed and supported by other UN legislation by several international legal instruments that *are* legally binding; in particular, the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. Both explicitly name adequate food and housing as basic human rights. Article 11 of the ICESCR states that:

> The States Parties to the present Covenant recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions.

A problem for countries in the developed world is that it is sometimes harder to implement these rights than in a developing world situation. Wernaart and van der Meulen (2016) found that in the Netherlands and Belgium, both 'are favorable to human rights', that in both countries the right to food is difficult to enforce through the domestic courts, in contrast to what these countries communicate in the international arena.

The right to food entitles everyone to regular and permanent access to adequate food which ensures a fulfilling and dignified life free of fear. It requires, among other things, that people should be able to afford an adequate and socially appropriate amount of food without having to compromise other basic needs, such as housing and clothing. This was developed further 70 years later at the World Food Summit in Rome in 1996 and further developed at the World Food Summit: five years later [WFS:fyl] to review progress. In addition, the UK has signed up to the *Sustainable Development Goals* (United Nations 2015) that call for an end to poverty in all its forms everywhere to end hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition, and promote sustainable agriculture. The UK government already has primary responsibility to provision the right to food and must be held accountable to upholding this commitment. These all are covered in the earlier definitions of food poverty and insecurity.

The duty to *respect* the right to food is essentially a negative obligation. Governments must not do anything that would prevent citizens and residents from accessing food. The duty to *protect* the right to food means that States must take measures to prevent third parties, including private businesses, from doing anything that would deprive individuals from accessing affordable, adequate and appropriate food on an on-going basis. This could include the development of a 'food desert' through so-called 'land-banking' whereby households are excluded from access to healthy food outlets or changes to welfare which make the vulnerable even more vulnerable.

The question that needs to be asked is can an increase in food bank usage been seen as an incidence in which governments are failing to establish rights which have already been established? If such citizens did not previously need to rely on food banks for support, then this is a regression in their realisation of their right (and cultural norm) to food.

There are many tensions in promoting a position based on rights to food and how this is put into operation; not the least of these come from the process of economic globalisation which has resulted in objections to taxation as a positive force. The objections are often being voiced by

the proponents of neoliberal economic policies and trans-national companies. The basis for these objections is that taxation and subsidies are unnecessary barriers to trade and therefore wealth creation. Olivier de Schutter, the UN Special Rapporteur for Food (2008–2014), said that:

> Foodbanks are a testimony to the failure of public authorities to deliver on the right to food and should be neither a permanent feature nor a substitute for more robust social programs. Food assistance in the form of the right to social security, such as cash transfers, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights, whereas foodbanks are charity-based and depend on donations and good will. There can also be a sense of shame attached to foodbanks. (de Schutter 2013)

He called for social benefits to be defined in terms of rights which government owe to the people. This essentially implies a citizen model of rights and duties. Food banks should not be seen as an alternative to social protection, as popular as they may seem. In his final report, De Schutter (2014) talked about this and titled his report '*the transformative potential of the right to food*'. As we say, earlier plans to cut benefits and to change the entitlement criteria undermine the central tenet of these rights. This equates with the concept of the greater good and the 'solidarité sociale' discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Relying on donations from individuals or companies and their distribution through charity does not meet the needs or rights of citizens. Talking about rights may seem like an esoteric response at a time of crisis when people are going hungry, but we hope the foregoing debates has demonstrated how, in the war of ideas, the food banks and other emergency food aid providers have won this battle of ideas, partially due to a weak opposition and the paucity of any other ideas or approach to solve the problem. This has been compounded by the lack of a united opposition, among campaigners, academics and civil society actors, in the face of charity provision and the portrayal of philanthropy as a positive step forward. A recent report of ours (Caraher and Furey 2017) questioning the appropriateness of food waste and food surplus as an answer to food poverty was met in some quarters with shock and surprise. We were accused in some online forums of making a case for letting people go hungry, food aid charities contacted us to ask did we not understand the good they were doing in feeding the hungry and of course some angry responses for daring to question the charitable, good nature of food aid providers.

From a legal perspective, the opposition to the growth of food banks has been less than effective, for example, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights sent a letter to States on 16 May 2012 identifying four requirements which any proposed austerity measures must meet in order to comply with international human rights law:

1. the policy is a temporary measure covering only the period of the crisis;
2. the policy is necessary and proportionate, in the sense that the adoption of any other policy, or a failure to act, would be more detrimental to economic, social and cultural rights;
3. the policy is not discriminatory and comprises all possible measures, including tax measures, to support social transfers and mitigate inequalities that can grow in times of crisis and to ensure that the rights of disadvantaged and marginalised individuals and groups are not disproportionately affected; and
4. the policy identifies the minimum core content of rights, or a social protection floor, as developed by the International Labor Organisation, and ensures the protection of this core content at all times.

To what extent have any of us opposing cuts and the growth of emerged food aid as a solution used the above? There remains much potential to use the above to develop further actions to improve the lot of the most impoverished and protect their rights to food. There is no specific right to food enshrined in UK legislation although the Government did sign the UNHDR (1948) declaration and was involved in the food summit in 1991 and the WFS:fyl in 1996. Perhaps a way forward is to legally test these commitments? We leave these questions to those who know more about the law and human rights than do we. Both the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the Office of the UN Special Rapporteur for Food suggest three approaches to introducing the right to food:

1. incorporating the right into the national constitution;
2. adopting a framework law relating to the right to food; and
3. comprehensive reviewing of all or the most relevant sectoral laws affecting the enjoyment of the right to food for their compatibility with this human right (FAO 2009, p. 3).

Conclusions

Now 75 years on from the publication of the Beveridge Report (1942), those who are most vulnerable are still dropping through the gaps in the safety net. The 'five giants' have not gone away: they have just been redefined, so those at risk of food poverty are largely the same group who are more likely to be obese and suffer from heart disease and diabetes; yet we do little to tackle these issues as a common cause. Our response must be to strengthen the safety net, not cut more holes or provide 'pick-ups' down the line when people have reached rock bottom or become destitute, as food banks do.

Food banks and other emergency food aid providers are probably here to stay, they are now part of the social landscape but we, as a society and they, as operators, need to curtail the growth of more and more outlets. Being realistic, we think that charitable food assistance can serve a critical, short-term need but the provision of food through charity and leftovers from a dysfunctional food system does not equate to fulfilling the right to food for all people in the UK. Food banks should be seen as failures of social welfare and the justice system. This sentiment was echoed by Winne (2009, p. 184). In his book on the US food system, he writes about seeing food charity and the rise of food banks not as a social positive but as a failure of the state to provide an adequate level of food and income security. Of course if viewed from the point of view of caring concern, volunteering and the use of food that would otherwise be dumped or sent for composting, then it is a success.

Salonen, in her review of food aid and charities in Nordic societies, demonstrated that food charity had a limited ability to address the social and material needs of clients. The additional religious support that some of these organisations offered provided added value for some of the food recipients, but also caused tensions. She established that:

> In Finland, food assistance differs from those modes of providing welfare where parishes and religious organizations act as social service providers and enter into contract agreements with public agencies. Instead, contrary to public welfare, which is based on rights and obligations, food charity is based on voluntariness, which does not spring from any legal responsibilities of the food providers or legal rights of the food recipients. (p. 12)

Similar results were reported from Iafrati (2016) where, combined with the limited supply leading to people not being provided with service, food shortages are exacerbated by shortages in volunteers and space.

Success should be measured by the retreat of food banks: to being at best emergency sources of food aid in times of crises for vulnerable groups and not being the mainstay of food assistance for many. In 'Austerity Britain' as asceticism in welfare provision tightens its grip, many people across the UK face a new reality of poverty and social exclusion. There are, of course, a whole raft of food projects which try to help in other ways: growing projects, community-owned and operated food co-ops; social solidarity stores (Caraher and Furey 2017). All these offer other ways of addressing food poverty within contemporary and normative ideals. Many new initiatives see the way forward through food democracy with people having a say in their food choices and involvement based on community ownership and mutuality.

But at the heart of all of this is a war over ideas, the idea that food banks are an adequate response to food insecurity and that civil society is better way to deliver these services as opposed to the state upholding the right of citizens to an income which enables them to access food in acceptable ways. In terms of the war of ideas, the possibility exists with Brexit to reintroduce the concepts and values that informed the establishment of the welfare state. Architects, such as Richard Titmuss, showed that the greater good was the driving concept and one that was embedded in the population in the form of the Beveridge Report (Titmuss 1970). Le Gross Clark and Titmuss in 1939 said that:

> There are only two further ways of making food more available. The first is to lower the prices of foodstuffs upon the retail market; the second is to provide food to certain sections of the community through the medium of the social services. There is no reason, of course, why these methods should be mutually exclusive … (p. 166)

Just Fair: Justice and Fairness through Human Rights might offer a model of a way forward.[6] It is an NGO operating in the field of rights. If we think of the above, surely there is place for a legal challenge to the welfare changes that are currently occurring especially in the light of the evidence that suggests such changes and sanctions in the benefit system are key in driving people to use food banks (Loopstra et al. 2015, 2016). Client Earth, a group of lawyer activists acting to save

[6] www.just-fair.co.uk, accessed 28 January 2018.

the earth, provides a model for a way forward. So linking activist lawyers around food poverty, food academics and community food activists with the recipients of welfare (like a Witness for Hunger mentioned earlier) would combine knowledge, research and activism to generate a new idea around food provision and the right to food.

The idea of universal human rights is a powerful and possibly transformative one and we need to tackle it from both a normative legal perspective but also using the evidence which shows a lack of impact of banks and other emergency food aid on food insecurity (Dowler and O'Connor 2012). Every person, wherever they are born and regardless of their social status, is entitled to the enjoyment of certain inalienable basic rights. 'Food Assistance', as in the right to an adequate income, social security, such as benefits, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights, whereas food banks are charity-based and depend on donations, good will and inconsistent supplies of food. Food banks cannot and should not be seen as a substitute for a comprehensive social security provision and redistributing food surplus and waste from supermarkets to food banks and other emergency food aid outlets are not substitutes for more structural approaches by companies to reducing food waste.

In relation to the situation in the United States, Curtis (1997, p. 208) asserts that '*voluntary food assistance serves a critical need but works deleteriously as well: to mask state failings*'. From Canada, Riches (1997) contends that '*it is clear that the evidence of two decades of food banking in Canada confirms it as an inadequate response to food poverty while allowing governments to look the other way and neglect hunger and nutritional health.*' In relation to the rights of those who find themselves in need of emergency food assistance from food banks, Dowler et al. (2001, p. 119) ask a pertinent question, "*Why should such citizens not be able to shop for food like everyone else?*"

Human rights are indivisible: the denial of one right affects the enjoyment of others; hence, the intrinsic link between the basic rights to housing, food and health. The role of the state should be to protect these rights and to address the gap between income and food costs. The problem of food poverty/insecurity needs to be addressed by government action to ensure that benefit delays and sanctions do not lead to families seeking aid from food banks and that the gap between income and food costs is closed. While it needs to be addressed by governments, we cannot rely on them to act accordingly; hence, the need for policy

advocates, champions and entrepreneurs to push the agenda forward. The idea of food as a right is key here as is legal recourse and the voice of this affected group. While it is patently ludicrous to suggest that a campaign based on food rights will solve the problem of hunger, from the available evidence it is equally ludicrous to suggest that food banks and charity provision of foods will solve food poverty or food insecurity and at best address the hunger of a small percentage of the affected population.

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CHAPTER 3

The Cultural and Economic Dimensions of Food Poverty

Abstract Here we set out the background to food bank usage and how households often draw on other resources before using food banks. We use the concept of a consensual, culturally acceptable food basket and compare this cost to a typical food parcel provided by a food bank. In this way, we attempt to put a social cost on the provision of emergency food aid. This is done by drawing on existing research from food pricing in Northern Ireland, one of the most deprived areas in the UK. This is compared to what has been called a consensual food basket which is based in everyday expectations of what is appropriate. All this is compared to spending in food across different income groups.

Keywords Nutritional quality · Welfare benefits · Fabian Society report Low-income households · Trussell Trust

> Food Poverty 'It is cooking cheap food in the microwave because you can't afford to use the oven.' Quote from Scottish Government (2016) 'Dignity' Report, page 9

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M. Caraher and S. Furey, *The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision*, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6_3

Introduction to the Cost Analysis of Nutritionally Adequate Diets Compared to Food Bank Parcels

The integral relationship between diet, health and income is well known. Food poverty manifests itself as the dilemma of putting food on the table alongside the long-term effects of food poverty including the habitual consumption of poor nutritional quality foods to the extent that lower income consumers are compromising food and nutritional quality to satiate hunger. The issue with food poverty is that for many it is not a once-off or occasional issue but one that manifests itself again and again. Toynbee (2003) in her book on living in poverty in Britain highlights how debilitating poverty is and the constant grind of having to struggle to manage on limited resources and manage the uncertainty of income and food. Poverty is not a one-off event that just happens a couple of times a month; for many, it is a long-term, degrading and demeaning situation. With food as both a social marker and a necessity, families and households face the challenge of not being stigmatised (Daly and Kelly 2015). Cutting back on food and eating in the home is one way of managing stigma behind closed doors. But managing the public, or visible, stigma of being in food poverty is more difficult. This is why families buy branded goods and eat out from takeaways even when money is in short supply. You want to do the best for your family and children even if this means spending more on food in the public sphere.

The food budget has long been appreciated as being the flexible item in the household economy (Dowler 1997; Lang 1999; Donkin et al. 2000; Inglis et al. 2009; MacMahon and Weld 2015). Consequently, food budgets are the most likely to be reduced during times of financial crisis (Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) 1994; Money Advice Trust 2014). As we discussed in Chapter 2, it is a fundamental human right that food is available and affordable yet this principle is undermined when a basic healthy diet is out of reach of our most vulnerable citizens; this cut-off point is where household income is less than 60% of the median household income, an internationally recognised standard (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2017). A more recent Joseph Rowntree Foundation report (2017) says that after 20 years of progress in addressing poverty that levels have started to rise again: to 16% for pensioners and 30% for children. The report locates the pressures on income in three areas summarised in the text box below.

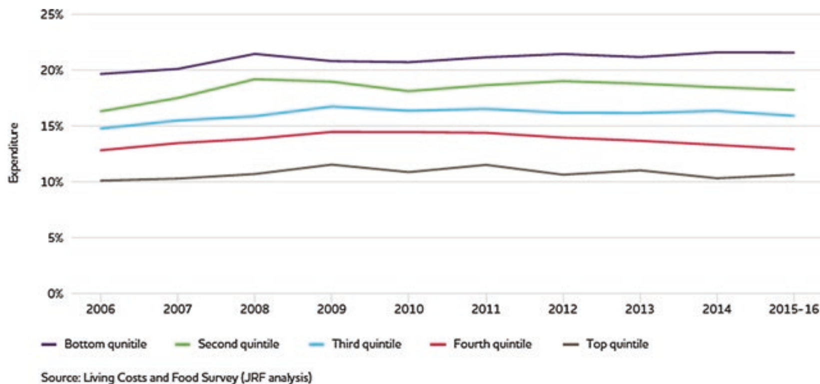

Fig. 3.1 Percentage of expenditure on food and non-alcoholic drink by income quintile (*Source* JRF report, 2017)

Box 3.1 Source JRF (2017)

Three factors led to falling poverty: increased support through benefits and tax credits; rising employment; and containing the impact of rising rents through housing benefit and increased home ownership. All are now under question:

- The continued rise in employment is no longer reducing poverty.
- State support for low-income families throuh benefits and tax credits is falling in real terms.
- Rising rents, less help for low-income renters and falling home ownership leave more people struggling to meet the cost of housing.

Also food is one of the main expenditures for those on low incomes; see Fig. 3.1, showing percentage expenditure on food and non-alcoholic drinks by income quintile. The estimates are that three million seven hundred thousand workers now live in food poverty due to pressures on wages and increasing outgoings in other areas such as food and fuel, sectors where prices have increased faster than general inflation. This addresses the point that the groups on food poverty are wider than those who are on welfare and having problems with either the level of welfare benefits or have been sanctioned and have a gap in income because of this. The nature of employment (part time) and rises in inflation relative to the lack of increase in wages all mean that employment is no guarantee to being a protective factor against poverty in general, and food poverty in particular.

The definitions of food poverty and food insecurity, as we saw in Chapter 1, are not only linked to nutrition and income but also contain a cultural element. So food should be culturally and socially appropriate. We also explored the issue of relative poverty where the normative, comparative and the emotive or experiential elements of food poverty based on the foods chosen or on offer as being equally important as the financial and physical access (Bradshaw 1972; Bradshaw et al. 2008). The Fabian Society Report (Tait 2015) on food poverty found that for various aspects related to food that those on low incomes pay a 'poverty premium', so they pay relatively more for food itself but also more for items such as kitchen appliances, fuel and access to food.

So, we now turn to using food baskets to incorporate elements of normative, comparative, felt and ultimately experienced food poverty. Shopping basket research is a longstanding methodology to investigate the affordability and availability of food. Its advantages lie in its utility in collating a depth and breadth of information and by adopting a standard structure to facilitate consistency of approach to data collection, and its relevance to the research objectives of ascertaining the availability and affordability of foodstuffs. It is to this as a way of looking at food poverty and insecurity that we now turn.

Shopping Basket Research

The problems of devising a shopping basket and defining which foods should be included that are both typical and acceptable to consumers has been discussed elsewhere (Leather 1992; Nelson et al. 1992; Lang 1999; Anderson et al. 2007). There are broadly two approaches to food basket research: one is focused on cost and availability as in the use of a basket of goods and services to measure inflation (Gooding 2016), the second on access to healthy foods. Both approaches can share elements of cost, availability and access (Bowyer et al. 2009). The comparative element is often the focus, so could you buy or access the items specified in the basket? With many healthy eating baskets, it is not that people eat what is specified in it but can they access it at a reasonable price if they wanted to and how does it compare to another area or group? The issues are those of choice and options, if I chose not to eat healthy and can afford to that is my choice, if I want to eat healthily but am constrained by income and access then it is a structural determinant and an inequity. This provides the basis for the standard of comparison between areas, groups and income levels.

Many studies have been conducted in an attempt to devise a 'healthy eating' shopping basket and to cost such a basket to ensure that the reference nutrient intakes are achieved by, and are acceptable to, all consumer cohorts (Piachaud and Webb 1996; Leather 1997; Donkin et al. 2000; Furey et al. 2002; *MacMahon & Weld, 2015; safe*food et al. 2016, World Food Programme, 2017). Others have adapted shopping baskets to address both nutrition, cultural and ethnic variations in food preferences (Dowler et al. 2001; Bowyer et al. 2009). Anderson et al. (2007) provide a useful summary of UK food shopping basket studies. Sooman et al. (1993) used a shopping basket approach of 29 foods 'which people are encouraged to eat more of' and a list of foods of 'which people are being encouraged to eat less' based on Health Education Authority information (1991). Piachaud and Webb (1996) carried out a price survey of 23 popular basic foods. Donkin et al. (2000) surveyed 71 foods and developed price indices and concluded that prices varied tremendously, with more than a fourfold difference between the cheapest price available in the area and the most expensive. This was refined by further work from Dowler et al. (2001), Caraher et al. (2010) and Bowyer et al. (2009) to take account of cultural and ethnic differences in areas such as the West Midlands, London and Preston. Furey et al. (2002) used the 'MAFF Low Cost Healthy Diet', which comprised meat, fish, eggs, cheese, milk, tinned fresh and frozen vegetables, bread, potatoes, sugar, preserves, pasta, tea, etc. and which purported to meet the nutritional guidelines established by the National Advisory Committee on Nutrition Education (NACNE) at a cost of less than £10 per person per week. A study by Cummins and Macintyre (2002) used a 57-item food list derived from the Family Budget Unit's 'modest but adequate' diet. White et al. (2004) studied 33 commonly consumed 'popular' foods.

It is appreciable from the diverse shopping basket methodologies employed to date, therefore, that it is complex to arrive at an affordable, consensual basket of foods that meets nutritional needs, in a culturally appropriate and socially acceptable way.

Low Incomes and Food Vulnerability

More recent research (*safe*food et al. 2016) constructed a food basket for four household types in Northern Ireland using Consensual Budget Standards methodology. Northern Ireland is one of the most deprived areas of the UK and has an above average dependence on welfare as income:

Northern Ireland, Wales and the North East of England jointly had the highest percentage of income from state support (21%) (Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) 2017). The Institute for Fiscal Studies has identified Northern Ireland along with North East England and Wales as the areas most likely to see increases in poverty in the next five years as the welfare system in the UK is reformed (Hood and Waters 2017).

This research in Northern Ireland involved conducting focus groups from a range of different socio-economic backgrounds in three different areas of urban and rural Northern Ireland representing each of the household types under focus. Participants variously discussed seven-day menus and associated shopping lists using the Consensual Budget Standards methodology that was originally developed by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at the University of Loughborough in collaboration with the Family Budget Unit, University of York (Bradshaw et al. 2006). The food items were priced in a large multi-national retailer (Tesco) and in local shops to arrive at the total food budget. The menus were assessed for nutritional adequacy. A final discussion group was held to determine how realistic the final composition of the food basket was.

The s*afe*food research found that a nutritionally adequate shopping basket of weekly food for a two-parent, two-child household type (primary school and secondary school-age) was £153.01, approximately £22 per day; 44% of a household income of £350.20, if dependent on social security. The total weekly cost of a minimum consensual food basket for a one-parent, two-child household type (pre-school and primary school-age) was £99.00, amounting to approximately £14 per day; 32% of household income (£308.45), again if dependent on social security. The total weekly cost of an equivalent food basket for a pensioner living alone on a state pension is £57.05; 34% of their household income of £169.08. Finally, a two-parent, two-child household (pre-school and primary school-age) dependent on state benefits would need to spend £115/33% of their weekly income (£350.20) to buy a minimum essential food basket. All this compares to an average expenditure of 11.3% across all income groups on food (DEFRA 2016). The chart, as shown in Fig. 3.2, from the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) (2016) shows the differences in expenditure between the lowest 20% of income earners and all households, using equivalised income. In 2014, households in the lowest 20% by equivalised income spent 16.4% on household food, 0.2 percentage points above 2007. Median income after housing costs fell 4% between 2003–2004 and

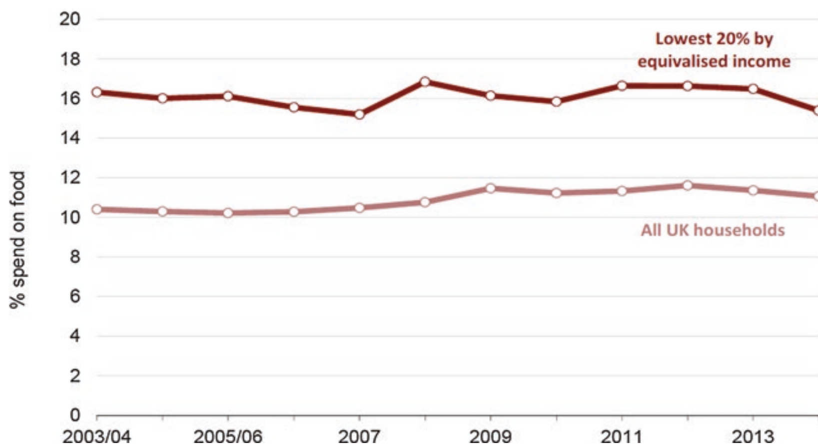

Fig. 3.2 UK population's expenditure on food and non-alcoholic beverages 2003–2013

2014–2015 for low-income decile households. The dip in expenditure from 2013 can be accounted for by households economising and buying less (DEFRA 2016).

Low-income households are of specific concern as they have a greater percentage of expenditure going on food and food is exerting greater pressure on household budgets, especially since 2007, when food prices started to rise in real terms. As already mentioned in Chapter 1, food is the elastic item in the household budget. The DEFRA (2016, p. 16) reports says '*food prices (in real terms) increased 11%. In 2008-09, the median income for low-income decile households reached its lowest level, 17% below that of 2002-03. Small decreases between 2011 and 2014 were partially reversed 2014-15 when income increased by 2.7%, coinciding with a 2.0% fall in food prices*'. Of course, food poverty does not exist in a vacuum; low-income households are more likely to be resource, fuel and land poor as well as more subject to financial shocks to the lack of savings and resources.

The cost of a healthy shopping basket appears prohibitively expensive, relative to income, in the context of the *Living Costs and Food Survey* (Office for National Statistics 2017) which indicates how the average UK household spent £56.80 per week on food which equates to 11% of total expenditure (2015–2016 figures). Lower income households spent a higher proportion of their total expenditure on food and non-alcoholic

drinks: households with the lowest income spent at least 17% of their total expenditure on food and non-alcoholic drinks, compared to their highest-income counterparts spending 8% of their total expenditure on this category. This spending is based on what people actually buy and even for a typical basket those on low-incomes the cost is higher, this uses a normative approach based on income and the proportion of expenditure on food. We now turn to the issue of consensual food baskets as a comparative tool.

Consensual Food Baskets

The consensual food basket is culturally and normatively informed. It asks what would you normally (normative) and comparatively (culturally) expect to be included in such a basket. In doing this, participants underestimate the cost but overestimate the amount that those on benefits receive, assuming that many are frivolous in their spending of benefits (Hirsch 2013). The minimum income standard as worked out consensually in the 2013 JRF report says: '*A minimum standard of living in Britain today includes, but is more than just, food, clothes and shelter. It is about having what you need in order to have the opportunities and choices necessary to participate in society*' (p. 8). The minimum as defined is about more than survival alone. Nevertheless, it focuses on 'needs, not wants; necessities, not luxuries' and in this sense is still parsimonious. In identifying things that everyone should be able to afford, it does not attempt to specify extra requirements for particular individuals and groups—for example, those resulting from living in an area of deprivation or having a health condition or disability.

The phenomenon is not particular to the UK. Barosh et al. (2014) investigated the price differential of a healthy and sustainable shopping basket. They found that the cost of the healthy and sustainable basket was greater than the typical basket on all neighbourhoods, irrespective of socio-economic status. However, households in the lowest income quintile would have to spend up to 48% of their weekly income to buy the healthy and sustainable basket, while households in the highest income quintile would have to spend significantly less (9%) of their weekly income.

Individuals on a low income therefore spend less money on food although they actually spend a greater percentage of their income on food products (Shepherd et al. 1996). MacMahon and Weld's (2015)

study found the cost of minimum consensual food baskets to be considerably greater for those in low-income households with many individuals having to relinquish '*necessary*' food items. We know from other research that those who end up using a food bank are the tip of the iceberg; so for every one or two food bank clients, there are six to eight who use other resources or manage using other resources. Perhaps one of the best examples of this is a study of 30 families in Liverpool (Getting By? 2015). This was modelled on the 1913 classic study by Pember Reeves in London (2008). Here the working families used community and family resources and there were only a few mentions of the use of food banks. This is typical with households relying on extended networks and connections, then using savings if they have any, and borrowing and using credit cards and pay-day loans before ending up at a food bank.

It is clear from the work of Loopstra and Lalor (2017) that those who end up using food banks are severely food insecure and more likely to come from areas where the government's reforms of the welfare system (through the introduction of Universal Credit and sanctions) result in more people ending up at food banks. They reported that the three most common household types are single male households (39%), lone mothers with children (13%) and single females (12%). Over 78% of households were severely food insecure, meaning that they had skipped meals, gone without eating, or even gone days without eating in the past 12 months. For a majority of households, this was a chronic experience, happening every month or almost every month over the past 12 months (p. viii). This food insecurity was alongside other forms of hardship where 50% reported going without heating for more than four days in a 12-month period, and one in five had slept rough in the last 12 months. The links between food insecurity and poverty and other forms of destitution are closely intertwined and there is a knock on effect from one to another. Work on the welfare system found that '*sanctioning appears to be closely linked with rising need for emergency food assistance*'; as sanctioning increased, more adults used food banks. For every ten per 100,000 adults sanctioned, the rate of adults fed by food banks rose by 3.36 adults per 100,000 (Loopstra and Lalor 2017). The sanctioning may, of course, not be a direct effect; many of those sanctioned may in fact have been referred by welfare officials as was seen in the Ken Loach film '*I, Daniel Blake*'.

The Social Cost of a Food Bank Food Parcel

Food banks offer a three-day emergency food parcel to referred clients. This food is principally donated by consumers who are encouraged to donate ambient food as suggested on food banks' shopping lists. For the purposes of this analysis, we identified the commonly-requested items from a selection of food banks' food lists. The normal price of the cheapest option for each food item was recorded, irrespective of brand, using mysupermarket.co.uk. The lowest price for each food product was recorded, as this is the most meaningful and accessible means of reporting the affordability of food from the point of view of the consumer. Prices were collated for four supermarkets with retail presence across the UK: Asda, Lidl, Sainsbury's and Tesco (refer to Table 3.1).

Remember from Chapters 2 and 3, FareShare (2017b) estimates that each meal they provide through local voluntary groups costs just £0.25. It is immediately obvious that the cost of a food bank emergency food parcel (extrapolated for seven days) is much reduced from that of a consensually agreed, nutritionally adequate diet. In comparing the cost of a pensioner living alone (£57.05) to a food bank's lowest-priced one week food list (£17.66), it is appreciable that a nutritious diet is three times more expensive than the emergency food parcels distributed by food banks. Similarly, comparing the average UK household's food expenditure (£56.80) to the cost of a food bank diet (£17.66) illustrates well the shortfall in the standard of living between the two dietary experiences.

In using this figure to extrapolate and calculate the cost of providing the 1,182,954 three-day emergency food supplies given to people in crisis across the UK by the Trussell Trust alone last year (Trussell Trust 2017), we deduce that private food donors contributed £89,547,961.78 to feed our most vulnerable citizens at retail price levels. It has been argued previously (Caraher and Furey 2017) that it is not the function of the charitable sector to absolve the Government from its moral obligation to provide social security. To do so, depoliticises the issue and passes the burden of a '*public health emergency*' (Taylor-Robinson et al. 2013) onto the third sector: in this case to the tune of £9 million. The Trussell Trust on its website on the 8 October 2017 reported that it had distributed 586,907 three-day emergency food supplies given to people in crisis in the first half of 2017, a 13% increase on the same period last year with 208,956 of these to children. The IFS reports that this situation will get worse if the current reforms are rolled out with working age parents with

Table 3.1 Food bank shopping list—pricing analysis *

Grocery item	*Tesco*	*Sainsbury's*	*Asda*	*Lidl*
Cornflakes	**40 p** 500 g	65 p 500 g	45 p 500 g	75 p 500 g
Tomato soup	**25 p** 400 g	50 p 400 g	**25 p** 400 g	35 p 400 g
Baked beans	25 p 420 g	25 p 400 g	**23 p** 410 g	**23 p** 425 g
Pasta sauce	45 p 440 g	55 p 440 g	**42 p** 440 g	65 p 500 g
Tinned peas	21 p 300 g	25 p 300 g	21 p 300 g	**16 p** 300 g
Stewing steak	£1.40 400 g	£2.50 400 g	**£1.37** 392 g	£1.65 392 g
Tuna—tinned	65 p 160 g	80 p 160 g	**60 p** 160 g	65 p 160 g
Tinned oranges	**35 p** 312 g	**35 p** 312 g	58 p 300 g	59 p 300 g
Custard creams	**45 p** 400 g	35 p 200 g	**45 p** 400 g	44 p 150 g
Sugar	70 p 1 kg	70 p 1 kg	64 p 1 kg	**59 p** 1 kg
Spaghetti	**20 p** 500 g	40 p 500 g	55 p 500 g	**20 p** 500 g
Tea bags	**25 p** 40 bags	50 p 40 bags	**25 p** 40 bags	75 p 50 bags
Shelf life orange juice	65 p 1 litre	80 p 1 litre	**55 p** 1 litre	**55 p** 1 litre
UHT milk	**49 p** 1 litre	90 p 1 litre	57 p 1 litre	**49 p** 1 litre
Tomato sauce	42 p 550 g	45 p 460 g	**38 p** 500 g	49 p 565 g
Chocolate	45 p 100 g	50 p 100 g	**30 p** 100 g	**30 p** 100 g
TOTAL (3-day parcel)	**£7.57**	£10.45	£7.80	£8.84
Extrapolated for 7-days	**£17.66**	£24.38	£18.20	£20.63

Note Own label/lowest price selected for each supermarket. Lowest price in bold
*Prices correct as of 28 October 2017

children suffering the most and thus leading to increases in child poverty (Hood and Waters 2017). Areas such as Northern Ireland, the North East, the East Midlands and Wales are expected to suffer disproportionally as they depend on welfare with only half their income coming from

earnings. When earnings rise, those who are more dependent on benefits are less likely to benefit. So higher levels of employment and rising wages and the London Living Wage alongside less dependence on welfare as income mean that in the South East and London groups are less exposed to the impact of benefit cuts. The IFS (Hood and Waters 2017) report says that the current welfare reforms by 2021 will remove £5.5 billion from the welfare system. We talk more about the overall welfare budget in the next chapter and the contribution of out-of-work benefits and tax credits to the total welfare budget. The point here is that all this reinforces the view that there is a drive for a low-tax, low welfare economy.

FareShare, as detailed in Chapter 1, operates on a different basis than the Trussell Trust. FareShare is a food redistribution charity that operates throughout the UK with the overarching aim to improve access to good quality, healthy food for low-income, vulnerable individuals while also supporting the food industry to reduce the environmental impact of food waste. It acts as a wholesaler or 'middle man' to those providing food to those in need such as community kitchens, breakfast clubs etc. FareShare declares its aims to include:

- Improve the dietary choices of vulnerable groups through the provision of a wide range of fit-for-purpose, surplus food;
- Work with Community Food Members to ensure the most vulnerable people have access to food;
- Partner with the food industry to source a wide range of surplus for redistribution, while also creating a positive environmental impact;
- Ensure 'No Good Food Should be Wasted' amongst the general public; and
- Engage FareShare volunteers in the storage and distribution of surplus, 'fit for purpose' food.

In so doing, FareShare helps people experiencing food poverty by redistributing quality surplus food from the food industry. Some of the 2016/2017 FareShare annual highlights can be found in Table 3.2:

The FareShare network redistributed, via its regional centres and FareShare's FoodCloud, 13,552 tonnes of food from food producers, supermarkets, food processors and fruit and vegetable growers. When this is converted into meals, this meant that FareShare redistributed 28.6 million meals to vulnerable citizens across 6,723 community food members (community and charitable organisations that receive surplus food

Table 3.2 Highlights from FareShare's 2016/17 annual report

£7,900 per annum is the average saving for organisations that it provides food to is thus allowing them to spend those savings on other goods and services. Total value of £22.4 million
This was their busiest year with an increase in the number of community groups benefiting from their service with the number of charities to 6,723
The number of people accessing FareShare food each week rose by 129% to 484,376
Over 13,000 tonnes of food were received (up 49% from 9,770 tonnes and 92.5% is surplus)

to supplement the ingredients for meals they prepare for individuals and families) in 2016–2017. It is unclear how this is costed and whether the costs are based on retail or wholesale value. For these organisations, surplus food reduces the amount they have to expenditure on food purchases, enabling them to focus more of their resources elsewhere. In monetary terms, they claim this represented £22.4 million worth of food value to the recipient charities (FareShare 2017a). Indeed, charities have estimated that it would cost £7,900 on average to replace the food they get from FareShare (FareShare 2017b). FareShare also received £2.8 million of income from donations in 2017 (FareShare 2017a). So at a conservative estimate the contribution of FareShare in direct food contributions is around £9.8 million based on each meal costing £0.25 plus the two million pounds plus of donations from individuals. As was noted in Chapter 1, they are proposing the establishment of a £15 million fund to compensate food producers who would otherwise send food to anaerobic digestion. The proposal, if successful, would mean that seven times the current amount of food could be redistributed within the charitable food sector through FareShare networks.

In 2016, FareShare commissioned NatCen Social Research to quantify the benefits of food redistribution for vulnerable people. The report concluded a variety of social benefits in respect of dietary variety, physical strength and energy for its service users while a number of economic benefits were also apparent including the ability to save money, greater ease in paying rent and bills, and an ability to afford to attend interviews (FareShare 2017b). In 2014, FareShare in Northern Ireland commissioned an independent evaluation, extrapolated over five years, to reflect the longer term impact and change experienced by stakeholders. The resultant Social Return on Investment (SROI) model reflected on

inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts as evidenced from service users as well as community food members (recipients of the donated food), food industry partners (suppliers) and volunteers. The benefits were found to accrue to all shareholders: service users (56%), volunteers (31%), community food members (10%), suppliers (2%) and environmental awareness (1%). The £216,343 invested in the period generated £1,628,927 of social value over five years equating to a SROI ratio of £1:£7.53 meaning that for every £1 invested approximately £8 of social and economic value was returned (GaugeNI 2014).

The NI SROI report identified the greatest impacts (£493,815.45; 56%) for the service users, delivering mental and physical health outcomes including feelings of inclusivity and belonging, and sustenance in respect of hot and varied meals reflective of the *Eatwell Guide*. Volunteers were secondary beneficiaries of the impacts (£273,245.59; 31%) with benefits relating to learning valuable professional and personal life skills, progression to paid employment, forming new friendships and learning more about healthy diets. Community food members (recipient organisations) were tertiary beneficiaries (receiving £90,361.19 or 10% of the overall impacts) through efficiency savings from food donations that they would have otherwise had to spend to procure. Food industry suppliers ranked fourth in the benefits accrued (£17,627; 2%) due mainly to reduced carbon dioxide emissions, reduction in food waste and increased staff morale as a result of volunteering. Finally, the environmental impact was determined to equate to £4518.37, deduced by diverting 86 tonnes of food waste and 360 tonnes of carbon emissions, with additional benefits itemised as reduced food mileage and more administration efficiencies in the reverse supply chain due to there being no need to return unused food stocks.

The SROI evaluation did identify an unintended consequence related to the potential for service users to develop a dependency or expectation for continual access to this food source. Clients commented that reduced choice in meals and uncertainty around snacks would contribute to stress and anxiety if the food supply was interrupted or ceased. The 2013 independent evaluation of FareShare in NI reported a £7.73 return for every £1 invested. In reviewing other public sector/NGO reports on SROI, it is clear that SROI can vary significantly depending on the organisation. In looking to mental health, sport, employment and training programmes among others, it can be appreciated that SROI can range between £1.91 returned for every £1 of investment upwards and £16.87

returned for every £1 of investment. By way of example, the estimated size of the Voluntary and Community Sector workforce in Northern Ireland is 44,703, while the Northern Ireland Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector comprises an estimated 241,264 volunteers. In other words, for every volunteer there are 1.19 members in the general paid workforce (or, for every paid member of the workforce there are 5.4 volunteers). The replacement of charity provision would result in the loss of this 'added value' but add value to the social experience of those in food poverty or suffering from food insecurity.

The above overview provides data and insight into the increasing demand for emergency food aid and the consumption culture that has facilitated the explosion of surplus/waste food. FareShare is delivering emergency food to charitable organisations that are providing food to hungry people. The efforts of FareShare and its counterparts are laudable in stepping into the chasm that our social security system that is not fit-for-purpose has neglected to fulfil. However, the co-existence of hunger alongside surplus food is an indictment of an unequal society that has been found to be failing some of our most vulnerable citizens. It has been argued elsewhere (Caraher and Furey 2017) that food waste and food insecurity are significant issues in their own rights, each worthy of its own informed and sophisticated debate. Yet the pressure is on companies to show action. The CEO of Tesco has announced that it will send no food to 'waste' but redistribute to charities for human consumption and the East of England Co-op announced that it will first sell food beyond its "best before" dates at discounted prices (Johnston 2017).

Conclusion: The Social Cost of Charity Food Provision

The macro-economy is experiencing austerity and the government is seeking to claw back money to resource public services; this is being done in three ways. The first is through efficiency savings so the move to Universal Credit is an example gone wrong of this; everybody agrees that the existing systems need reforming but how Universal Credit has been rolled out is an exercise in how not to do things. The second is through changes in entitlement so freezing of benefits and raising the bar so fewer are eligible (Royston 2017; Hood and Waters 2017). The third approach is by using the third sector as the point of referral, for our focus here this is food banks, although similar trends have existed with civil society providing debt counselling in lieu of the state. The welfare system is bearing

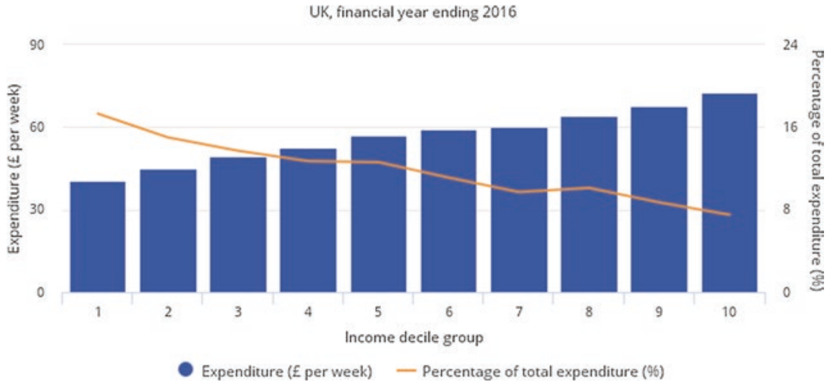

Fig. 3.3 Expenditure on food and non-alcoholic drinks (absolute expenditure and as a percentage of total expenditure) by OECD-modified equivalised disposable income decile group for the UK, financial year ending 2016 (*Source* ONS 2017)

the brunt of efficiencies with negative consequences for the adequate resourcing of a sufficient safety net to protect our poorest citizens. We know that those on low incomes whether via low pay or welfare benefits pay what has been called a poverty premium (Tait 2015). This is where they pay more proportionally for goods than those on higher incomes. With respect to food, we set this out at the beginning of the chapter with the general expenditure on food being 11.7% and for those in the lowest quintile the amount spent is 17% according to JRF figures. Our estimates are that this would rise to over 40% if they were to access a consensually healthy diet. The chart, as shown in Fig. 3.3, illustrates the shortfall in the standard of living between the two dietary experiences.

So at the individual level the food charity sector is bridging the economic divide by making food available either free or at minimal cost to some of those who are food insecure or in food poverty. At another level, this model is also allowing the various bodies charged with addressing the health and welfare of citizens off the hook by providing food and hence diverting attention away from the reasons people cannot access food. Many of Poppendieck's seven deadly '*ins*' can be applied here.

However, when we cost the food provided through charity provision, it is one-third the value or cost of a consensual and culturally acceptable food basket. It is important to remember that these food baskets are

representative of a Minimum Essential Standard of Living: these are set at a minimum but socially acceptable standard of living for the household type; they do not allow for emergency situations such as unemployment, delays in benefits, other unexpected costs or unplanned for situations.

It is immediately obvious that the cost of a food bank emergency food parcel (extrapolated for seven days) is much reduced from that of a consensually agreed, nutritionally adequate diet. In comparing the cost of a pensioner living alone (£57.05) to a food bank's lowest-priced one week food list (£17.66), it is appreciable that a nutritious diet is three times more expensive than the emergency food parcels distributed by food banks. Similarly, comparing the average UK household's food expenditure (£56.80) to the cost of a food bank diet (£17.66) illustrates well the shortfall in the standard of living between the two dietary experiences. The difference in pricing or cost between charity provision and the normative cost of buying that same food is a threefold (3.2) difference. Therefore, for each referral, there is a saving to the state as providing the money for a normative food basket would cost an additional £50–60 million. We will use this figure in Chapter 4 to address the issues of the push back of the welfare state; for the moment, the context is that this total spend on social security and tax credits is £14 billion and for Christmas 2017 an extra one billion pounds was spent on food compared to Christmas 2016 (Kantar Worldpanel 2018). It is important to remember that these figures only apply to those who are food insecure and on welfare, there are many more households who are food secure and do not use or access food banks, we deal with this broader aspect of food poverty and insecurity in the next chapter.

Notably, the above data do not take account of price differentials for store type, store location or store size, etc. which may have the effect of further increasing the cost of the shopping basket from that stated if circumstances are such that the only accessible food store is more expensive than the sample data. These data represent therefore an *underestimation* of the price ratio of experiential food costings compared with a nutritionally-adequate food basket.

In times of austerity, when people cannot afford a healthy diet, this has repercussions for physical health and mental status. There is a dichotomy between food being essential to living while simultaneously being the flexible item of the household budget. The macroeconomic state described above, coupled with individual households' inability to afford

the basic human right to eat is further complicated by inequalities in unemployment/employment/underemployment status. There are situations whereby people are unfit to work or want to work longer hours than their employer can offer. The dwindling of resources to this public utility compounds dependence on social security. As noted with food, there is no provision to tackle food poverty directly in current welfare schemes; it used to be that the low welfare schemes were used to do this in periods of emergency by providing a grant or loan to buy food. With cutbacks, this avenue is now under increasing pressure. So referring citizens to food banks and food in the third sector saves the state money and makes these resources available for other needs.

Currently, the third sector is scaffolding the inadequacy of government aid. A 2014 investigation (Panorama 2014) discovered that £2.9 million of public money had been spent by local authorities between 2012 and 2014 to help feed people. Meanwhile, food banks (Trussell Trust and independents) and FareShare are collectively providing emergency food aid equating, conservatively, to £18.7 million, possibly rising to £23 million if we account for donations. This, we estimate, represents the social value we place on charity provision, where the value of the food provided is one-third the cost of what it costs to buy it via normal retail channels. So families in receipt of food aid and charity are in receipt of aid, which is one-third cheaper than they might expect to buy it for in the shops. Allowing for economies of scale and the fact that a lot of this food source is judged not to be saleable to 'ordinary' consumers equates to the concept of 'left over food for left over people'. As we noted in the introduction to Chapter 2, the most efficient way to ensure people eat healthily is to provide money to the household and specifically to women, this enables a household to leverage maximum benefit from resources. The fact that food banks and other charitable aid approaches are delivering food directly to people can be used as an excuse for not providing more financial resources. Debates in this arena often hark back to the belief that those in low incomes cannot be trusted to make the correct decisions with respect to food and/or that they will spend it on non-essentials (Wells and Caraher 2017).

The charitable sector cannot and should not replace the government's moral duty to provide social security (de Schutter 2013). Using Poppendieck's seven deadly 'ins' we can pin point lots of potential pitfalls from adequacy to sufficiency of supply. Something must and can be done to reduce chronic and acute reliance on emergency food aid parcels in

order to ensure that families may access adequate food in socially acceptable ways without fear of developing a dependency or anticipating stress or anxiety should this emergency food source disappear or be in short supply. It is important to remember that access to food banks is not a right and many food banks operate both a referral system and a limited period of use.

All this needs to be set beside proposed Government plans for savings in Welfare spending which amount to between £7–15 billion in various forms. The IFS (Hood and Waters 2017) has identified a planned £10 billion saving by making changes in entitlement levels. In total, this represents a 0.02% saving to the Welfare budget (note this is the total welfare budget which includes health care and pensions). It is the conclusion of this chapter that direct payments should be made to households in poverty and this should be based on a consensual food basket. Our data suggest that the expenditure on food to those in receipt of benefits to account for a social care and equity would need to be increased by a factor of three. This would equate to a rise in the welfare budget of 0.02–0.03% or £60 million.[1] By spending only £60 million from the savings from the Welfare budget in direct payment entitlements, it will be possible to adequately protect our vulnerable citizens at source. We know from the available research that having disposable income is how families (mothers) manage best in leveraging the maximum benefit for food. It is a proactive and pragmatic way to prevent paying the direct health care and indirect social costs attributable from a poor or inadequate diet: hunger, malnutrition, obesity (costs more than £1 million per day in Northern Ireland alone in direct and indirect healthcare costs diabetes, dental caries etc. (*safe*food 2012). It is myopic and both morally unacceptable and cost prohibitive *not* to reallocate the savings made in this way.

The figures here only refer to those in receipt of welfare and do not include those who are food insecure or in food poverty but outside the system. If we use our figures for a consensual food basket, this would entail an extra expenditure of £1 billion pounds (£1,000/individual) a year. Of course, the mechanism for getting this money to households would have to be worked out. Ideas for the latter include extending free school meal provision or tax credits for those in low-income or unstable work situations. Of course this should not be done in isolation;

[1] Our calculations are based on estimates of existing numbers and costs; they do not take account of rising food insecurity or food prices, which are predicted to rise.

there is a need to work across systems and departments and link the various schemes which are meant to encourage and support healthy eating. Tackling food poverty among the working poor can be partially addressed by modifications to the system so that when individuals move to employment then benefits outweigh the costs, for example, Children's Society (2017) reported that once a family with one child passes the £7,400 threshold allowed under Universal Credit, they would need to earn £1,124 a year more, the equivalent of working 2.4 hours more each week at national living wage, to make up for the loss in free school meals (Children's Society 2017), so linking benefits such as free school meals and Healthy Start to changes in UC are also important.

So why does all this matter? The rollback of the state and the drive for austerity in welfare policy is causing problems which end up costing in other areas such as health. In arriving at practical and policy recommendations, due consideration must be paid to itemising the real costs and benefits and identifying who are the real losers and beneficiaries. Such scrutiny is necessary in order to prevent any potentaial for unintended consequences, for example, the inappropriate divergence of resources from sub-groups of the population (e.g.) the working poor.

The re-emergence of the scientific principles of diet and work, for example in the Victorian workhouse diet, was based on the minimum for survival and outdoor relief or work was calculated on the Speenhamland principle of subsistence [the importance of this ruling was this it informed four generations of public health and welfare policy right up to the establishment of the Welfare State in 1948], where the rates for pay of outdoor relief were set below the lowest agricultural wage, thus encouraging pauperism rather then preventing it. These are emerging in new guises, the working poor, the state subsidy of workers in the food and hospitality industries. All this is related to the above issues with part-time work and zero-hour contracts.

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CHAPTER 4

Food Banks and Their Contribution/Detraction from Welfare Budgets

Abstract In this chapter, the issues related to how food banks both save and cost the broader welfare system are set out. Food banks are not stand-alone organisations and depend on their operation for failures and gaps in the welfare system, both are intertwined. The overall spend on welfare budget is set out and the proportion of this allocated to social welfare is estimated. This is then related to commonly held attitudes, myths and opinions about welfare budgets and allocations with the implications for food provision. The calculations developed in Chapter 3 of the diversion or savings afforded by food banks are set out. The discussion asks key questions related to the equity of charity-based food bank provision vis-à-vis provision through the state, as a right.

Keywords Right to food · Food bank plus · Social supermarkets FareShare · Working households

> It's time that poverty should bolt the door…. (p. 10)
> If we knew how to find deserving poor
> We'd do our share…
> We know the evils of mere charity (p. 13).
> From the Countess Kathleen by W.B. Yeats (1982)

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M. Caraher and S. Furey, *The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6_4

Introduction: Reactions and Actions

As the scale of the problem of food banks and foodbanking becomes more apparent, food banks are questioning their own purpose and even existence. A small number of food banks have made a deliberate statement by closing down. One such food bank, the NG7 in Nottingham, in 2014 said that it would shut its doors after Christmas because the organiser, the City Council, was justifying welfare cuts on the grounds that desperate people can turn to food banks instead. A quote from the food bank said:

> Given these facts and despite our best ongoing efforts, we have recognised that we are not being used as a temporary service of last resort, but rather being seen as a part of the long term strategy of replacement for statutory services, who have a duty and the resources to address a large part of the need. (Owen 2014)

Food banks and food aid charities, of course, say they are not the solution but their business model nonetheless remains one of growth and leveraging more food from a food system that is cutting back on waste. These, what we described in Chapter 2 as '*successful failures*' (Ronson and Caraher 2016), present a public face of success, for example, a statement on FareShare's Twitter account said '*When we saw the problem of UK hunger we found a solution. It's simple really*' (https://twitter.com/FareShareUK, accessed 14 February 2018 and http://fareshare.org.uk/what-we-do/, accessed 18 December 2017). The suggestion is that the solution to hunger is simple. All this ignores the issues of justice, rights, appropriate food, stigma and the ongoing issues of living in poverty.

Some of these critiques have given rise to the development of alternative models and to what has popularly become known as 'food bank plus' models. Often these are additional services such as debt-counselling services or alternative models of food provision such as social supermarkets mentioned in Chapter 1. For an example of this, see the Birkenhead 'model'[1]: this incorporates a food bank, a holiday hunger scheme and a school breakfast club. The tension here is that these are voluntary or charity provision and not state-sponsored or run. As Livingstone (2017) notes, such models run

[1] See http://www.frankfield.co.uk/campaigns/feeding-birkenhead.aspx, accessed 6 April, 2018.

the risk of franchising the very people who are disenfranchised rather than dealing with the real issues which lead to food poverty, this eschews the issue of the right to food and that charitable provision does not adequately address the right of citizens to food (De Schutter 2010).

Newer models attempt to move beyond the current food bank provision of food, including one that is working in Liverpool by a group called *Can Cook. Can Cook* is a social enterprise which trades commercially and invests profits into establishing jobs for local people, and providing fresh, chilled meals, free of charge to families in food poverty.[2] They have chosen this in response to the growing number of people going hungry in the city of Liverpool, and the lack of fresh food available to them. The year 2017 saw the launch of phase two of the campaign, focusing on providing good food for children through the school holidays, and extending its reach to more families in the region through the provision of 'Good Food Banks' (see http://www.cancook.co.uk/food-poverty/). Another example, already mentioned in Chapter 1 is SUFRA in NW London: this styles itself as a 'Community Food Bank & Kitchen' which aspires to support disadvantaged families suffering food poverty in the local area.[3] Beside the food bank, they run a food academy and advice surgeries. The vision is to develop a community hub, which provides a front-line support service which is the '*first point of call for local people in crises*'. The emphasis is on community but the vision to become the first point of call runs the danger of allowing state services to abdicate their responsibilities and creating the impression that this is enough.

In Chapter 3, we set out the meal and weekly cost or value of providing food through a food bank or food charity, the reverse of the poverty premium (Tait 2015). The low cost at which we provide food for people in poverty shows how much or far off the mark we value or rather devalue those groups. This draws on the concept originally put forward by Booth in his primary and secondary poverty lines (Booth 1902; Rowntree 1941; Townsend 1979). The estimated cost of providing a meal as established by FareShare is 25 pence per meal provision, and by the Trussell Trust as £17.66 for a week (Chapter 3), whereas our analysis suggests that the social and cultural aspects significantly raise the minimum necessary for an individual or household to fulfil his or her basic

[2] See http://www.cancook.co.uk, accessed 6 April, 2018.

[3] See http://www.sufra-nwlondon.org.uk/about/sufra-nw-london/, accessed 6 April, 2018.

food and non-food needs by a factor of three. And the emphasis needs to be placed on basic; this is by no means a luxurious basket of goods. We estimate that the current direct cost to the food charities of providing food is of the nature of £20/25 million pounds from donations and surplus/waste food from the food industry. A breakdown of these figures is provided in Table 4.1.

Based on these figures, the total of £22–24 million is conservative. If we then apply two further factors to this: firstly, readjust the numbers to reflect the estimates of the total number in food insecurity by a factor of eight (Taylor and Loopstra 2016) and secondly, multiply this by a factor of 3.2 to reflect the cost of a consensual basket set out in Chapter 3; we arrive at a figure of £563–640 million to help those experiencing food insecurity and in receipt of welfare.

We are using the multiplier effect of eight above as the numbers experiencing food insecurity and using food banks are the tip of the iceberg and only represent those who have access and knowledge of such endeavours, see Chapters 1 and 2 and the work by Taylor and Loopstra (2016). Taylor and Loopstra quote data from a study undertaken in 150 countries by the United Nations Food and Agriculture

Table 4.1 Estimates of total expenditure on food based on costs/pricing as supplied by the charity sector

Organisation	*Basis of calculation*	*Total equivalent expenditure on food*
Trussell Trust[a]	One million food parcels to 500,000 recipients	£9 million
FareShare[a]	Benefit to food aid provider based on 21.9 million meals and including additional benefit to civil society	£10/12 million
Other food aid providers	Independent food banks and charity aid provision including that by groups outside the remit of the Trussell Trust Christian faith network such as Muslim food banks and Sikh Temple Gurdwaras. Some of these may well be served by FareShare (Based on a combination of sources such as the Independent Food Bank Network and Forsey 2014)	£3 million
Total		£22–24 million

[a]See Chapter 3

Organization which estimated that 10.1% (CI ± 2.9%) of people aged 15 or over in the UK were food insecure in 2014. On the basis of these figures, FAO estimates that 3.7 million people in the UK were living in moderately food insecure homes and 4.7 million people were living in severely food insecure homes in 2014, totalling 8.4 million. We judge that this is a conservative estimate as according to statistics for 2008/09, thirteen and a half million people in the UK were living in households below this low-income threshold of 60% of median income and as we say earlier many predict this is set to rise by 2020. This is 22% of the population and is an increase of one and a half million compared with 2004/05. Also of concern is the fact that 44% of those in poverty were found to have a household income below 40% of the median, the highest percentage on record (Parekh et al. 2010). We also caution that these figures are set to rise due to changes in the economy, food inflation, the freeze on welfare benefits and changes in the operation and entitlement to benefits through Universal Credit (Hills 2017; Hood and Waters 2017; Royston 2017). Royston (2017) points out that in 1996, 75% of those in poverty were in non-working households but that by 2015 the majority of those living in poverty (54%) were in low-income working households. Some of these figures are smoke and mirrors and due to complexities of the welfare system and re-classifications of existing households. So while employment levels have increased, this is countered by the nature of the employment such as part-time and zero-hour contracts in the gig economy. All this leads to insecure and inconsistent income, the loss of some benefits such as school meals and the inability of the system of Universal Credit to deal with such situations, the system sees the move from unemployment to employment as a line in the sand not as a process and does not offer transitional protection (Royston 2017). What is clear is that alongside welfare poverty income poverty is set to increase, thus creating more demands on food banks.

At the individual level, our estimate that upwards of £22–25 million is being spent on providing food to citizens through charities is disturbing and shows how far we have moved from the post-WWII concept of the greater good and the social contract. We are fast approaching a situation where food banks are seen as the answer to food poverty and the displacement of the welfare state by charity provision (Briggs and Foord 2017; Dowler and O'Connor 2012). At another level, and the focus of this chapter, we locate this within an overall budget of welfare

provision and how the focus on using waste and surplus food has distracted attention from the real underlying causes of food poverty. These are two important issues and should not be conflated as a singular matter (Caraher and Furey 2017).

In December 2017 the media was full of reports that food banks would not have enough food to meet the demand for Christmas. A similar situation occurred in Australia 2012 when they ended up distributing bread and Vegemite. This is not just a matter of not having enough but also of appropriate foods, channels of distribution and timing. At Christmas, companies and other donors will donate and make available Christmas food after the holiday period manifesting in a revision of the '*let them eat cake*' to '*let them eat Christmas cake, but in January!*' This is a continual problem for food banks and food charities which are reliant on what is donated or surplus/waste in the food system that week. This relates to at least four of Poppendieck's seven deadly 'ins' namely problems of **insufficiency** of supply; **inappropriateness** of that supply; nutritional **inadequacy** of that supply based on the previous two points; and the **instability** of supply. The food basket work we draw on is often critiqued as being aspirational and that nobody shops for a healthy basket of goods; in a similar vein, the food parcel handed out through a food bank or the food served in a luncheon club is equally 'fictitious', as it depends on what is available or has been donated and can vary from week to week. Nonetheless, these remain aspirational as to what people should, if they chose, be able to afford and access and in research terms can be useful as a comparative tool. A further refinement of these food baskets could be to build in regional variations to take account of cultural variations across the country, differential prices and even the cost of food. For some areas, the cost of accessing food (i.e. travel) could be factored in.

Leftover Food for Leftover People

So our arguments and data are all leading to the conclusion that food charity does not address the fact of not being able to afford healthy and appropriate food or remove the fear of not being able to provide for the household (see the discussions in Chapter 1 on food poverty and Chapter 2 on the growth of food banks for more elaboration on these issues). Food aid may address on a case-by-case and need-by-need basis

the issue of hunger and temporary food insecurity but does little to address the issues that drove people there in the first place. The social effect goes beyond not being able to afford a healthy or normative food basket but also includes the ongoing worry and fear of not being able to put a meal on the table. Faced with difficulties, worries and anxiety about the ability of their household budgets to stretch to meet their family needs in terms of both accessing and affording nutritious and varied diets amidst other household essentials, such expressions of concern and worry are testament to the fact that there are associated mental health impacts with food poverty.

The various other options outlined in Chapter 2 and above are often proposed as the alternatives to the food bank model of charity. However, what is less often presented is a volte-face of a defence of the welfare system and the fact that the alleged savings and cuts to the welfare budget are in fact likely to lead to greater costs and liabilities. Here we present the case for a central system of welfare which addresses the issues of social justice and efficient household economy. Here we locate the food spend by charities within the overall welfare budget and specifically the welfare benefits and tax credit part of this budget.

Our fundamental contention that food banks are successful failures, as outlined in Chapter 2, still stands and forms the underpinning principle of this chapter. According to Ronson and Caraher (2016) they fail to address hunger and as De Schutter said in a talk in London:

> In emergency situations people turn to foodbanks. Foodbanks, however, are a testimony to the failure of public authorities to deliver on the right to food and should be neither a permanent feature nor a substitute for more robust social programs. (De Schutter 2013)

Our critique is not of individual food banks and food aid per se but of the system which leads to these becoming the '*new norm*'. In terms of the model of operation, we contend that the growth and expansion of such enterprises is a feature of what we have previously set out, in Chapter 2, as successful failures. Failures because they do not address the underlying issues of food poverty or food aid, conflate the redistribution of food waste as a solution to hunger and food insecurity; and successes because they continue to expand and capture the public imagination (Lorenz 2012; Ronson and Caraher 2016).

Welfare and Work Changes and the Path to Food Charity

Among the key reasons for the use of food banks are for those on welfare, that of reduced benefits and sanctions; for the working poor a sudden or unexpected shock to an already fragile income: this could be an unexpected bill, the loss of working hours or increases in other household outgoings such as the need for a new pair of shoes. As we outlined in Chapter 3, the current research suggests that those on welfare and low income have suffered from a stagnation in incomes due to freezing of benefits and wages as other outgoings have risen (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2017; Hood and Waters 2017; Geiger 2016). We are keen to reiterate the point that the use of a food bank is not itself an indicator of food poverty and that many families continue to manage without resource to food charity (see Chapters 1 and 2). Indeed counter to popular opinion, many individuals refuse a referral to a food bank as they view it as not dignified or appropriate (The Scottish Government 2016). They may not even see themselves as food poor; Edin and colleagues in the United States have showed how many low-income families neither views themselves as poor or see food banks as appropriate to their needs (Edin and Lein 1997; Halpern-Meekin et al. 2015). Furthermore the way in which they view welfare is important, so tax credits and annual rebates are seen as a right, whereas food stamps and other government initiatives are seen within a charity framework, less acceptable and less likely to be taken-up or applied for even when eligibility is clear. The other important distinction to be made when comparing US to UK research in costs and benefit systems is that health care insurance is a cost in the United States whereas in the UK it is a right and free at the point of delivery.

Nor indeed do food banks give rise to increases in demand, they bring to the fore previously unmet needs (Lambie-Mumford et al. 2014; Lambie-Mumford 2017) but still do not address the breadth of this who are food insecure and/or living in food poverty.

The Welfare Budget

It is important to locate social security and help for food within the overall welfare budget. Hills (2017) shows that the greatest beneficiaries of the welfare system are middle- and upper income groups. Changes to the national welfare system are mirrored at a local level with changes to what

was called the Discretionary Social Fund (see Royston 2017). For those in paid employment, especially among the lower paid groups, changes to employment contracts and stagnating wages *vis à vis* rising food prices have the same effect as freezing benefits (Royston 2017).

There are essentially four 'welfare' myths or misunderstandings and these relate to the following:

1. the myth that the majority of the welfare budget is spent on unemployment and tax credits - in fact only about one in every fourteen pounds is spent on social security, employment and tax credits;
2. misunderstandings and misinformation of what constitutes welfare funding;
3. welfare recipients are 'well off' and therefore have no incentive to seek work or come off welfare; and
4. the myth of '*them and us*': in real terms, the biggest beneficiaries of the welfare state and middle- and upper income groups (Geiger 2016; Hills 2017).

The language used to describe poverty and welfare is itself indicative of an undermining in public trust and perceptions. Politicians, on the right of the political spectrum, tend to locate poverty within a moral failings mind-set and cycles of deprivation, where the culture of poverty is handed down from one generation to another (Seabrook 2013; Wells and Caraher 2014). The concept of the underclass permeates many of the debates here. The work by Bradshaw and colleagues (Bradshaw et al. 2008) found that people with little experience or knowledge of the benefit system, significantly overestimate what benefit levels are and are taken aback when they find out what people are asked to live on. In fact '*most of those below the poverty line are unable to reach a standard of living that the public think everybody should be able to afford*' (p. 49).

Understanding Welfare Systems

Others such as Royston (2017) have highlighted the current dangers of the benefit system and how the changes are putting even more at risk. The move to a system of Universal Credit will, under its current terms, result in removing entitlement to free school meals from one million children. According to the Children's Society, once a family with one child passes the £7,400 threshold allowed under Universal Credit,

they would need to earn £1,124 a year more—the equivalent of working 2.4 hours more each week at national living wage—to make up for the loss in free school meals (The Children's Society 2017). Key for our purposes here is that there is no recognition of food security in the family or household's situation nor is there a recognition that families moving to work often end up in employment which is insecure and lacks the guarantee of a regular income, i.e. the gig-economy. A simple solution is the extension of free school meals to all on Universal Credit (Royston 2017, p. 327) and a broader recognition of the existence of food poverty. It is not our intention here to enter into an extended discussion on the new system of Universal Credit and/or tax credits, others have done this and we recommend reading Royston's (2017) detailed description of the system and the changes. There are two separate issues with the new system of Universal Credit. The first is technical problems with the system rollout and implementation. The second are fundamental changes to the underpinning principles of conditionality, which are underpinned by 'myths' of the great 'unwashed' abusing the system. For us, the lack of recognition of food and food budgets and any protection of them is still an unresolved issue which existed before the conception of Universal Credit. It is possible to set a minimum food spend for different family and household units within a system such as Universal Credit. It is also possible to set regional variations on a food basket to take account of regional price variations and food preferences.

As noted above Hills (2017) shows that the biggest beneficiaries of the welfare system are middle- and upper income groups not those most in need. Changes to the national welfare system are mirrored at a local level with changes to what was called the Discretionary Social Fund (see Royston 2017, pp. 240–241). For those in paid employment, especially among the lower paid groups, changes to employment contracts and stagnating wages *vis à vis* rising food prices have the same effect as freezing benefits.

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, households and families before they turn to food banks, draw on other support mechanisms as in the case of 30 families in Liverpool (Getting By? 2015); so there are more out there suffering and at risk of food poverty. We are not intending to rehash these debates here but refer to some key readings for those interested in the broader welfare system, which is in a constant state of flux and revision (Joseph Rowntre Foundation 2017; Hood and Waters 2017, Royston 2017; Geiger 2016). For our purposes, we argue that all these changes are what drive people to use food banks and seek out emergency food aid, as we pointed out in Chapters 1 and 2. Additionally,

food banks and the system of foodbanking fail to deliver social, cultural and appropriate food to people; they further contribute to the depoliticisation of hunger and poverty, but here we address the economic issues and the potential displacement effects in the wider welfare system. The food basket costing shows the discrepancies between a normal (normative and culturally appropriate) food basket and the foods in a parcel from the food bank. Again we reiterate the point that food poverty has both cultural and relative elements to it. Sociologists talk about the social appetite and this is an important aspect of relative poverty (Germov and Williams 2008). While food that is sold cheaply due to its unsuitability such as that nearing its sell by date or due to small damage to the packaging is fine to eat; and many may buy it because they have concerns with food waste, 'saving the planet' or just seeking a bargain; this is a matter of choice and not one of gifting what is otherwise seen as disposable (Caraher and Furey 2017; de Beaufort 2014; Livingstone 2017).

Much is made of the fact that the supply of food to food banks and food aid charities enables them to make savings and spend the money elsewhere on other services and so we compare that saving with the overall welfare budget and attempt to draw out some conclusions from this. Yet this comes at a cost, which is at one level social but at another level moral.

The Broader Picture of Welfare Provision in the UK: Implications for Foodbanking

Seventy five per cent of UK government spending goes on the welfare state. Much public debate is around the myth that the population divides into those who benefit from the welfare state and those who pay into it—'skivers' and 'strivers', 'them' and 'us', the '*deserving*' and the '*undeserving poor*' (Hills 2017; Geiger 2016; Wells and Caraher 2014). The myth is that this money is spent in and on benefits while in fact the welfare state is broader with spending on health care, education and pensions accounting for greater percentages. In fact, only one pound in every seven is spent on out-of-work benefits and tax credits (Hills 2017). Yet when asked about where monies are allocated and how much a welfare recipient receives the general public, politicians and journalists consistently overestimate the amount people receive in benefits while underestimating what it takes to purchase a healthy or normative basket of food. Likewise, both politicians and the public overestimate the amount of fraud in the system (Wells and Caraher 2014; Hills 2017; Geiger 2016).

Additionally, the perceptions of the amount provided to those on welfare and benefits are constantly overestimated both by the general public and politicians (Royston 2017). Far from being a minimum safety net, they are like the old public health principle of being below the socially acceptable minimum standard. This fits with the current political dogma of low welfare, low taxes and encouraging people back to work. Never mind the fact that for those on benefits a return to work or an increase in working hours often results in a loss of income (Royston 2017, p. 6). This is not to deny that the spend on welfare is high and indicative of a failed economy, but the point is that the way in which social welfare is understood and its users are portrayed contributes to misinformation and stigma. Pensions by far form the largest spend and are generally protected and index-linked. Political questions as to why this is so and the answers range from this is a group that votes and exercises power, pensions are now protected by what is called the triple lock with a guarantee to increase the state pension every year by the higher of inflation, average earnings or a minimum of 2.5%. This is in contrast to social welfare payment such as the allowance for jobseekers which has been frozen, in effect a cut as other prices and outgoings have increased (Royston 2017).

It is also clear that the welfare system, while acting as a safety net, can also function to reward and encourage positive behaviours but the problem is that the current move to Universal Credit is punishing people through freezes in payments, the use of sanctions and its inability to handle transitions.

Conclusion: The Proportion of Spend on Welfare Benefits *Vis à Vis* Food

In the financial year ending 2017, the UK government spent £264 billion on welfare, which made up 34% of all government spending. In the financial year ending 2013, the government spent £253 billion on welfare, around 35% of government spending. Around £30 billion is spent on personal social services. About £44 billion goes on benefits for people who are ill or disabled, while £10 billion goes on elderly care payments. Over £46 billion goes on family benefits, income support and tax credits. This includes benefits such as Child Benefit and support for people on low incomes. Around £2.2 billion goes to the unemployed. Total pension spending has increased by 9% since the financial year ending 2013. This isn't surprising as life expectancy has been steadily increasing, so

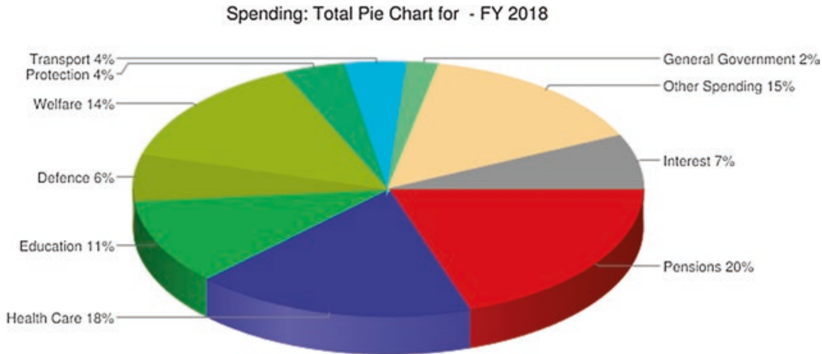

Fig. 4.1 Visual representation of total welfare allocation for 2018 (*Source* https://www.ukpublicspending.co.uk/uk_budget_pie_chart)

pensions are being claimed for longer. Aligned to this is the need for additional social services as we have not managed to increase the dependency ratio and there are a lot more elderly people needing personal care services. In fact, social welfare is not a major part of the overall welfare system; remember one in every 14 pounds spent on welfare goes to the social welfare element of the overall welfare state budget (Fig. 4.1).

Developing the work of Geiger (2016) and how people misjudge and misrepresent spends on welfare, particularly around what are called the deserving and undeserving poor. Figure 4.2 from the Office for National Statistics shows the differences between what people judge to the case and the actual spends. Of key interest to us here is the guesstimate that £44 billion is spent on unemployment benefits while in fact it is £2 billion.

For unemployed people claiming Jobseeker's Allowance or Universal Credit, there were 804,100 people claiming these benefits in September 2017. This number had increased by 3.3% compared with a year earlier. All the predictions for the economy are that these figures will increase and we will see groups previously protected also falling into poverty. As an example of the latter, pensioners and rates of poverty among older groups have failed due to the 'triple lock' on pensions and the political engagement of older people. This may well be revered in the next five years as general inflation and food inflations increase (Hood and Waters 2017).

The myth of the welfare scrounger, the total amount spent on welfare, levels of fraud and the amount of benefits one receives are consistently

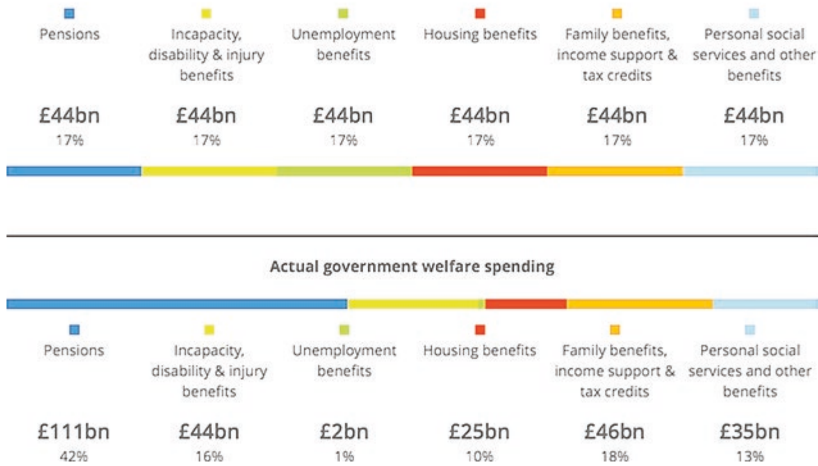

Fig. 4.2 Visual representation of Office for National Statistics (ONS) data comparing estimated allocation and actual allocations to welfare (*Source* ONS https://visual.ons.gov.uk/welfare-spending/)

overestimated by both the public and politicians alike (Toynbee 2003; Geiger 2016). Geiger (2016) reports that when surveyed in 2012 people were asked '*out of every £100 of this welfare budget, how much do you think is spent on benefits for unemployed people?*' half answered 40% and a quarter estimated it at 60% with an average of just above 40%. Hills (2017) says this equates to £35 billion out of a £500 billion budget. The majority goes on state pensions and health care. In 2012, the amount was actually 4% and now with the cuts talked about in Chapters 2 and 3, it is heading towards 2% of total spend (Royston 2017; Hills 2017). Why does this matter? It matters because one of the criticisms levelled at the welfare system and conversely used as a justification for food banks is the cost saving to the state, the taxpayer and the voluntary groups providing food.

Allowing for future developments to changes in the welfare system and Universal Credit, the plans are for a low-tax, low welfare economy which encourages people to work. As well as cuts to welfare budgets, there are plans to change the entitlement criteria which will save money. However, within all of this are lost the debates over what Titmuss in

1968 called the '*commitment to welfare*' and the principle of contributing to the greater good. The general trend is for less support for welfare spending (Hills 2017; Geiger 2016), often based on messages and portrayals of those in receipt of benefit as abusing the system. This is further enhanced by politicians who equate the broader elements of welfare provision as being dominated by welfare benefits (Royston 2017; Toynbee 2003). These responses need to be nuanced as other research shows that the general public overestimates the amount that those on welfare benefits receive but also assume that the bulk of welfare spending is on the areas of social security, unemployment benefits and out of work tax credits. In fact, the greatest spend is on pensions, as described above. There is a need to communicate issues clearly in these days of 'fake news' and the drive to disenfranchise those who are among the most vulnerable in our society (Livingstone 2017).

Our estimates show that built on the basic minimum of a food bank parcel the savings to the state social welfare system is of the nature of £20–25 million from the direct referral to food banks and other food-based charities. To give them a social acceptable consensual-based food basket, these costs would rise to between £60 and 75 million.[4] So on one level this looks like a saving to the state and taxpayers but the social costs and indignity of poverty are not factored into these costs. The issues of rights, social justice and equity of access are not accounted for in these figures. In the wider scheme of things, £60/75 million is only 0.02/0.03% of the total welfare budget or 0.4% of the allocation to social welfare and as noted for compassion purposes the additional retail expenditure on food for Christmas 2017 over 2016 was one billion pounds; £13–15 billion on bonuses in the City of London in 2016, commercial fraud being investigated of the order of £173 billion again in the City of London. This is the relative cost or value we place on those in receipt of welfare. We are not suggesting that simply increasing or allowing for a food spend within welfare allocations will on its own improve the dietary intake of recipients. Any such endeavour needs to be supported by other inputs such as public health initiatives and ensuring that healthier food costs less than unhealthy food. We would suggest that the establishment of a standard of maximum income expenditure on food be

[4] Our argument and costs here relate to those using food banks and other charity provision not to the wider group who are suffering from food poverty and do not access food banks, see Chapter 1 for a full discussion of this.

established and that is the first step, this should then be supported by changes in the welfare system to recognise the importance of food as a contributor to long-term health, diet-related non-communicable diseases (DR-NCDs) and obesity. The links between poverty and obesity are strong. In the medium terms, improvements in diet will contribute to reduced health and social care costs; this should be seen as an investment not a cost. The problem has become one of perception. Hills (2017) in his book sets out the myths around welfare and '*them and us*', and tells the story where a participant at a presentation he gave said '*the trouble is, the poor got too expensive*' (p. 15). From the perspective of food and social rights, the cost of providing a healthy, affordable, socially appropriate food basket is minimal when compared to other costs and spends in the system. Also as noted in earlier chapters, the consequences of poor diets range from indignity through educational performance to long-term ill-health outcomes.

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CHAPTER 5

Conclusions *So What Is the Future?*

Abstract This chapter brings together the debates raised in the previous chapters, these range from the right to food and the need for a consensually acceptable basket of food, through the rise of food banks and the consequences of this growth which are a depoliticisation of food poverty alongside an impression that hunger is being tackled. The argument is put forward that the actual savings are minimal within the social welfare budget and may in fact be in breach of human rights. A case is made for action based on using the human right to food as the glue for a campaign to involve the existing food charity networks in a lobby for change. There is a need to tackle the factors in the current welfare system which drive people to using food banks to address food insecurity while looking at the issue within a larger framework to help those in low paid jobs who are at risk of food poverty.

Keywords Foodbanking · Successful failures · Right to food
Working poor · Seven deadly 'ins'

> The state trading in food is practicable. …. It is within the wit of man to find an alternative to competitive private enterprise with market prices as a means of obtaining and distributing food to replace economic by human laws, to substitute managed for automated provisioning of the people. (Beveridge 1928, 1942)

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M. Caraher and S. Furey, *The Economics of Emergency Food Aid Provision*,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-78506-6_5

Introduction

In this book, we set out the context for the rise in food poverty alongside the societal failure to ameliorate food poverty through foodbanking. The UK is recognised to be the sixth richest economy in the world, yet the presence of erratic work (zero hours) contracts, underemployment, unemployment, low incomes and, increasingly, benefit levels set below socially acceptable levels and the use of sanctions compound the prevalence of poverty. Unfortunately, the existence and extent of food poverty are not routinely measured and monitored in the UK (Taylor and Loopstra 2016). Furthermore, we do not know how many people are reliant on food banks and even if we did, it is likely to be an under-quantification since the use of food banks does not represent the totality of those experiencing food poverty (see Chapters 1 and 2). While providing a crucial human need for food, food banks are essentially successful failures because they do not fulfil the social and material needs of their client in a sustainable way. Using estimates, then approximately 8.4 million people in the UK are food poor and thus at risk of being temporarily food insecure and in food poverty (Taylor and Loopstra 2016). This links with the data on poverty which show that the shift is to in-work poverty, with 2015 data showing that the majority of those in poverty were in low-income households (Royston 2017).

The modern face of hunger is complicated with few experiencing low calories on a continuous basis or suffering from under/malnutrition; modern food poverty is driven by occasional but repeated food insecurity and often temporary but recurring hunger in households. In this respect the ones, far and away, who are hungry are mothers, they sacrifice their own nutritional intake for the rest of the family or household. This is surely a disgrace in a modern economy where the issue is not the absence of food but the right to that food and a basic standard of living (Sen 1992)!

Poppendieck (1998) talks about the '*advocates*' dilemma' with food banking; this is akin to the old environmental adage that *'you have got to act even if what you are doing does not make a difference'*, food banks deliver something concrete and engage volunteers in activities. Food banks are now part of the social landscape; they are not going to disappear and to some extent this is to be expected. Their role in helping those in need should be acknowledged—as one activist said *'we need to find solutions that enable people's budgets to go further'* but this chapter

will locate these helping initiatives in the social framework of welfare. The problem is that critiques of the approach are often seen as attacks on the volunteers and are met with a riposte such as '*well what do you do with all this waste food when people are going hungry?*'

As Dowler (2003) noted, food has not been built into welfare policies and debates, some of this lack can be accounted for by the fact that post-WWII with the advent of the welfare state '*hunger*' was seen as a problem that was being tackled through general welfare and the welfare state (Timmins 2017). In more recent times, the problem of hunger was seen as being addressed by the market and the provision of cheap food. The problems here are that many are working on an old-fashioned idea of food poverty and food insecurity, the main health outcome associated with food poverty is now obesity; temporary periods of hunger give rise to people eating unhealthy and energy dense food when resources are available, and this is because such foods are cheap, energy dense and filling. The same groups who go hungry are also obese; this is the face of modern hunger and malnutrition, and introduces a problem that we pay for in health care terms later on in life as people develop complications associated with obesity. So the right to food and the failure to address this is also compromising the right to health as set out in the Declaration of Human Rights under Article 25.1 (Waterstones: Amnesty International UK 2013). As we saw in Chapter 3, the changes to the welfare system and the lack of regulation of the '*gig-economy*' could be seen under the terms of the letter sent to countries by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2012 (see Chapter 2) requiring that austerity measures should not contradict any human rights as can be argued is happening with the changes to the UK welfare system through the introduction of Universal Credit.

There is a need both for food banks and the foodbanking networks to adopt and change to the times, but also there is need to leverage the potential of their advocacy (Alemanno 2017; Caraher and Perry 2017). A further key underpinning factor is the right to food and the fact that food assistance in the form of the right to social security, such as cash transfers, food stamps or vouchers, can be defined in terms of rights; food banks are charity-based and depend on donations and good will and thus are not based on rights (De Schutter 2013). These two principles, the war of ideas and the right to food, have contributed to many of the debates and the framing of the changes to welfare, such as the deserving poor versus the undeserving poor. For example, in the changes

to welfare under Universal Credit, the term unemployed is no longer used but is substituted by 'jobseekers'. The move to Universal Credit and the reformation of the social welfare system would seem to contradict human rights and the requirements not to make access to issues such as food more problematic (Wernaart and van der Meulen 2016; Ziegler et al. 2011).

The welfare system was set up to help people live lives free from want and squalor. Fast-forward through eight decades of 'progress' and this vision is currently undergoing massive reform resulting in the removal of an estimated £5–10 billion from this important safety net and further savings planned by changing the entitlement levels by 2020 (Hood and Waters 2017; Royston 2017). In the foreseeable future, changes in April 2018 will result in a loss of £2 billion and will impact on those families and households most in need, this equates to 11 million families (Corlett et al. 2018). The same authors predict a net spending cut every year of £1.5 billion, '*driven mainly by cuts to the in-work support element of UC (work allowances)*' (Corlett et al. 2018, p. 27). For a scheme originally designed to prevent our most vulnerable citizens falling through the cracks, all of this raises important concerns. This removal of support means that those with fewer resources and savings available to respond to a crisis are now not able to draw on social support from the state (Royston 2017). Many families and households in poverty are one step away from crisis with little in terms of savings to draw on; many are surviving from pay cheque-to-pay cheque or living on credit; the latter with inflated charges for these loans. Even if the food bank network manages to source more food, this is not meeting the right of citizens to guaranteed and continuous supply (De Schutter 2013, 2014).

Our analyses in Chapters 3 and 4 have uncovered the difference in the cost of a nutritionally adequate diet, average household food expenditure and emergency food parcels distributed by food banks. Using this intelligence, we estimate that the savings to the state in not supplying food or money for food through the welfare system are approximately £60–75 million per year. As was shown, this is a tiny amount of the social welfare budget only 0.5%. This is based on a consensual basket of goods as set out in Chapter 3 to meet nutritional as well as social need. For the wider issues of food poverty among the working poor to be addressed this would entail a budget of £600 million or 3–4% of the total social welfare budget; of course given the interconnectedness of the issues the

costs could be spread across departments such as health and agriculture. The figure is multiplied by a factor of between seven and eight to take account of wider food poverty in the community. This is based on most estimates that the users of food banks represent between two and three of every ten people at risk of food poverty.

As stated in Chapters 2 and 3, the right to food is a societal one and one enshrined in human rights legislation. Food banks can undermine the state's obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food (Dowler and O'Connor 2012). The business of foodbanking has reached endemic proportions to the extent that politicians laud them as a societal good in the face of adversity and austerity, cementing the move from food as a '*right*' to food as '*charity provision*'. Again we remind readers of the audit tool provided by the '*seven deadly 'ins*' (Poppendieck 1998) and the cross-cutting issues of inequity and dignity.

Food poverty now demands attention as a public health emergency; one that the government has absolved itself from solving and the charitable sector has stepped into bridge the growing chasm (Lorenz 2012). For this, the third and charitable sectors are to be commended. However, the solution lies not in the provision of emergency food aid to those who are food insecure and living in food poverty. Food banks are probably here to stay; they are now a feature of the food and social landscape, yet they need to change and adapt to a new and rapidly changing environment as well as adopt a more proactive approach to food poverty. So what we need is an approach which is not built on further expansion of this network as it does not guarantee a right to food and is socially stigmatising. We need to remind ourselves that the problem is not one of a lack of food but of the right of access to food (Sen 1981, 1992). Despite claims that such moves are not practical there are indications of such moves, for example, Scotland is moving in this direction. '*The Dignity Report*' (The Scottish Government 2016) proposed that the solution to food insecurity and food poverty be grounded in a right to food approach, and that the government seek to meet the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goal of ending hunger by 2030. So what has happened under a joint government and third sector collaboration in working towards this target? By shifting away from emergency food aid as the solution and towards preventative and rights-based measures which increase the incomes of people facing crises and support them to feel able to access food in a dignified way, it is also working to address the underlying causes of the income crises

which fuel food insecurity.[1] A blog established under the auspices of the campaigning group Sustain expresses similar sentiments and actions for England (Dalmeny 2017). Knight (2017) in his review of poverty in the UK argues that the narrative around poverty is broken and that instead of tackling poverty we need to create a narrative or vision where poverty is eliminated by creating the society we want; for food poverty a similar process should be undertaken. What would a UK look like without food poverty and hunger? How could we achieve this and what resources and changes are required?

Food Rights and Protest?

The use of food rights alongside actions to increase incomes and perhaps lower the gap between wages and food prices are now emerging after a period where such ideas were out of fashion, this calls for action by the state as Beveridge believed was necessary 75 years ago and which was also called for in 1938 when food was seen as an important part of the UK's national defences (Beveridge 1928; Le Gross Clark and Titmuss 1939). Of course the means through which UK governments act (including Scotland and Northern Ireland) will have changed but the time is opportune to address issues of food poverty and food bank usage as the UK leaves the European Union. There is a new British Agricultural Policy (BAP) being developed to replace the European Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Alongside or in conjunction with this it would be timely to develop an anti-food poverty policy in ways that has been done in other countries such as Brazil (Rocha 2016).

The existence of food poverty is a juxtaposition alongside public calls for a rights-based approach to food. The role of the state should be to protect these rights and to address the gap between income and food costs. The social injustice of being hungry, or worrying about becoming hungry due to being unable to afford the most basic of human needs, brings with it physical and mental health concerns. The potential to become socially excluded when food and mealtimes are supposed to be social occasions is yet another perversity that dehumanises the hungry individual. The voices of those in food poverty are not often directly heard or even listened to. Research found that food bank users

[1] Menu for Change website http://menuforchange.org.uk/what-we-do/, accessed 5 January 2018.

in the UK were not often directly quoted, but instead food bank volunteers and others acted as a 'proxy' voice for them, reporting anecdotes or stories of food poverty (Wells and Caraher 2014). Food bank users when visible were featured as 'case studies' often alongside an appeal for donations to food banks. In contrast, the views of politicians, activists and celebrities on those living in poverty were reported. Some alluded to food bank users as undeserving or opportunistic or blamed their poverty on personal failings—for example, lack of self-control, poor domestic skills or financial judgement.

As we noted above, food banks in 2018 are familiar and normalised, they have developed from standalone charitable enterprises and social franchises to well-organised networks with their own food systems and distribution channels. Livingstone (2017) asks '*[B]ut through foodbanking charities, by sharing and gifting food, are we franchising the very people who are disenfranchised*?' The global financial crises of 2007–2012, which some maintain is not over for many in our communities, resulted in financial institutions such as banks being bailed out by governments while food banks expanded to deal with the effects of this crisis (Seabrook 2013; Sutton 2016). So those with resources have been rescued while condemning those already on the margins to seeking additional help through charity.

Of course for the reasons previously highlighted, this helps highlight food insecurity within the welfare system but this is not a long-term solution to food poverty as much of this occurs in groups who do not access food banks or charity. We contend that welfare itself is not a sustainable option to food poverty but the levels of support and benefit should be adequate to help people make choices which are appropriate and healthy (Royston 2017). For every recipient of a food bank parcel, there are seven to eight others who are also at risk; hence the need for an approach beyond the food bank and welfare.

As noted earlier in Chapter 4, the changes to local welfare schemes and budgets have resulted indirectly in referrals to food banks. What we know from earlier successful attempts to manage the food and welfare systems is that local knowledge, involvement and control is essential. Beveridge highlighted the importance of over 2000 local food committees in WWI as being a contributory factor for the distributions and rationing (Beveridge 1928); Oddy noted a similar success story for WWII (Burnett 2001). Hence, the involvement of local people and knowledge is essentially for any lobbying and change, and this should include the direct voices of those affected.

Riot Versus Right

Food banks provide essential food and non-food items to their clients. While providing emergency food aid, what is missing is the ability to access nutritious food in socially acceptable, ongoing and culturally appropriate ways. E.P. Thompson in his review of the 'moral economy' of the English crowd in the eighteenth century noted that food riots were often a flash point for the anger of the populace. They were aimed at a more fundamental truth, which was the erosion of traditional liberties and privileges, and food offered a convenient focus for dissent and social protest as opposed to merely a protest against food or hunger (Sutton 2016; Thompson 1993). There have been no riots directly related to food since the 1932 Belfast Outdoor Relief Riots (Mitchell 2017); even the interwar protests against food shortages passed off peacefully. Some argue that food banks are the way of diverting the attention—depoliticising food—of the crowd and the public at large (Sutton 2016). Currently, the emphasis is on '*othering*' those in receipt of welfare and those in poverty as if they form a separate social group outside of mainstream society. This is heightened by the media's tendency to stereotype users of food banks (Wells and Caraher 2014). Seymour (2009) argued that a common distinguishing feature of these stereotypes is that those experiencing poverty are a '*drain on society*'. Protest and what Thompson (1993) called the '*moral economy of the crowd*' are hard to marshal in the face of the two dominant narratives: those of the feckless poor and the provision of food by charitable enterprises as solving the problem of hunger (Glaze and Richardson 2017).

The new protest is probably in the forms of advocacy and lobbying (Caraher 2003). Fisher (2017) highlights the case of the campaign in Ontario to address the issue of recognition of the place and cost of food in welfare budgets. Freedom 90, Ontario's '*union*'[2] of food bank and emergency meal program volunteers made three demands:

1. *Lay us off!*
   The Government of Ontario must ensure that social assistance and minimum wage levels are sufficient for everyone to have adequate housing and to buy their own food.

[2] This is not a formal trade union but a union or joining together of volunteers working in food banks.

2. *Mandatory retirement by the age of 90!*
Many of us have been volunteering for twenty years and there is no end in sight. The Freedom 90 Union demands the Government of Ontario take urgent action to end poverty and make food banks and emergency meal programs unnecessary.
3. *Freeze our wages! Or double them!*
It doesn't matter because we are unpaid volunteers[3]

The point is that the volunteers have become frustrated with never-ending needs and moved with humour and wit to a campaigning agenda. If the volunteers in the existing UK food bank and food aid networks conducted a similar campaign, huge pressure would be brought to bear on government. This remains an unexplored avenue of food policy action (Alemanno 2017; Sutton 2016). We link future advocacy to the need to hear the voices of those who are '*experts by experience*' and can point to solutions. We reiterate our point that consulting people (volunteers or users) on their experiences of food banks is not a route to a solution. It is clear that such research can contribute to refinements in delivery services at food banks but do they contribute to the furtherance of food banks as solutions by identifying effectiveness and efficiency answers?

Hunger is Solvable if Only We Have the Political Will

A problem for those of us working in this area is the lack of a coherent narrative in the face of food banks offering a service. The core issue is not about the effectiveness or otherwise of food banks and their inability to address food security but about what is called the war of ideas (Smith 2013). Like the idea put forward by Knight (2017), previously mentioned above, we need to envisage the society we want and work towards this, and not be encumbered or distracted by research of the effectiveness and efficiency of charity food provision. The food bank movement and food aid charities often fall back on arguments on ideas of doing something immediate and addressing hunger with waste/surplus of food which would otherwise go to landfill. The academic evidence is clear: food aid does not address food insecurity (Lorenz 2012; Riches and Silvasti 2014; Tarasuk et al. 2014) and the model of operation depends

[3] See the detail on http://www.freedom90.ca/demands.html, accessed 6 April 2018.

on growth and exerting more efficiencies from a food system that has shrinking amounts of waste food (Caraher and Furey 2017; Ronson and Caraher 2016).

In addition to the evidence from authoritative studies, there is a need for a clear, simple and compelling narrative opposing these misleading arguments in a way that resonates with the general public and policy makers. Perhaps we need greater emphasis on the idea of healthy food as a matter of rights and the rights of children to an adequate, appropriate and affordable food supply. When Oxfam UK engaged in domestic poverty issues, it created a storm of protest with MPs objecting to its activities and supporters cancelling their membership as they felt that this was not what they had signed up for (Hope 2014). The Scottish based '*Hungry for Change*' initiative which has Oxfam UK as a lead partner is piloting the way through community based responses and a definitive shift away from food charity (Aggarwal et al. 2017).

While there is a considerable literature on the lived experiences of food bank users (Garthwaite 2016; Garratt 2017; van der Horst et al. 2014), this often does not consider them as 'experts' or '*experts by experience*' but as recipients of aid. They are rarely asked for solutions to the problem they face in accessing food. This divide is also seen in the media where the voice of users is often that of the grateful recipients of aid (Wells and Caraher 2014).

So What is to Be Done?

The question to be asked given the health and social outcomes of food poverty is '*can we afford not to address this*'? The hidden costs emerge later in health care and social care costs. As outlined in Chapter 4, this can be supported by a range of activities and interventions such as extending free school meals, and making the gap between income and food prices smaller. This can be done through subsidies on healthy food and through the welfare system by extending healthy eating schemes (Lambie-Mumford 2017). A key element that needs to be recognised is that the move from welfare to work is not seamless and welfare needs to mirror the flip-flop nature of modern employment. One of the problems with our current welfare system is the lack of integration. There is general agreement that the system needs fixing but the process which was driven by the then Secretary of State, Iain Duncan Smith, has been a disaster in terms of implementation but also it has fundamentally altered

the principles of welfare provision (Royston 2017). In the guise of modernisation and efficiency not only have systems changed but also the concepts of operation and eligibility. Food is not even per se a formal part of this and hence the emergence of the charity and food bank sector (Dowler 2003; Lambie-Mumford 2017). And, as we have been at pains to highlight, the majority of those in food poverty are not those on welfare but those in work, so welfare reforms on their own are not sufficient to tackle food poverty.

The issue of controlling prices or making the gap between incomes and food prices smaller is contentious as governments have moved away from direct intervention in the market; yet, as the opening quote would suggest, it is not beyond the '*wit of man*' to do something. Mechanisms still exist for governments as can be seen in the example from Scotland of '*Menu for Change*'. They can do this by setting price controls, subsidising healthier options, setting minimum income levels and changing the benefit system to reward behaviours such as a return to work where claimants do not forfeit benefits in kind such as free school meals (Royston 2017). For those in receipt of welfare, there are two issues which need to be tackled to address all the above: the first is the restoration and recognition that existing benefit levels are inadequate to access a socially acceptable and healthy diet: the second area for action is for those on low incomes to lower the gap between incomes and food prices. This means addressing a set of wider policies such as employment policies and family support and education. There is a need for welfare systems such as Universal Credit to recognise the modern employment practices, and not assume that moves to work are seamless and therefore benefits are immediately withdrawn.

There is a need to address the social and nutritional adequacy of the food provided by food banks. We have discussed the monetary cost of a consensually agreed and nutritionally adequate food-shopping basket in Chapter 3. It is the stark reality that this undeniably necessary sustenance is beyond the reach of many on benefits and low-income wage earners. Such inability to afford the cumulative food and non-food expenditure required to adequately provision a household limits one's potential to participate fully in life on a par with your peers. Food parcels from food banks can help address food insecurity at crisis points but cannot in a medium- to long-term timeframe address food poverty or the anxiety associated with it. The supply chain of food banks and food charities is precarious depending on donations, food drives and what is surplus/waste

in the food chain at a particular point in time. Of course, another way to achieve this is for government(s) to work more directly with food banks as Rocha described the process in Brazil and de Labarre and colleagues in France (de Labarre et al. 2016; Rocha 2016).

In terms of consultation and advocacy, there is a need to use and listen to the voice of 'experts by experience' not just their experiences as recipients of food aid but as having a view on the solutions. This is necessary for the development of inclusive welfare policies around food insecurity and poverty (Beresford et al. 1999; Alemanno 2017). This may be best done by creating a movement at the local level and in the absence of central government moves on these issues (except to cut costs) the best route may be at the local level through city and regional governance. An alliance of city and regional governance which incorporates the voices of users and recipients of welfare to solutions could be a powerful force for change.

Conclusions: A New Agenda for a Rights-Based Approach to Food Equality in the UK

The possibility exists with Brexit and leaving the European Union for the UK to reintroduce the concepts and values that informed the establishment of the welfare state (Millstone et al. 2017; McFarlane et al. 2018). We need to re-set the vernacular around benefits to re-define it in terms of rights which government owe to the people. In so doing, this will reduce the demonisation of benefits and address the notion that the working poor are food insecure and at risk of food poverty because of poor decision making or a lack of will power (Caraher 2016; Ziegler et al. 2011). There is a need to galvanise the safety net of welfare benefits and address the structural causes of food poverty so that ultimately the solutions may be upstream instead of applying Band-Aid solutions to chronic situations. There is a need for a re-emergence of welfare as a safety net to strengthen the safety net, not cut more holes or provide 'pick-ups' down the line when people have reached rock bottom or become destitute. This needs to be informed by data on where welfare spend occurs and countering the myths around the deserving/undeserving poor and scroungers.

Welfare and low-income wages need to have a food element built in, there are numerous calls for the official measurement of food insecurity (Taylor and Loopstra 2016; The Scottish Government 2016), and for

the reasons set out in Chapter 1 we think this should extend to food poverty. With the work from Loughborough on minimum incomes (Padley et al. 2017), safety levels can be set within both welfare payments and wages below which it can be deemed that people are at risk of falling into food poverty and thus a factor for spending on food can be achieved. Additionally, while we support calls for these measure this should be followed by a parallel set of actions designed to gauge what is most effective in helping people to access healthy diets. This is the focus of the '*Scottish Menu for Change*' initiative where the indicators of success will be a stasis in the number of food banks, fewer referrals to them and fewer people in need overall.[4] (Another way of approaching all of this is to consider the development of a minimum set of standards around access to food and services as opposed to the development of minimum income levels as set out by the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University (Bradshaw et al. 2008). This would address Dowler's (2003) concerns about food not being included in welfare policies and link the issues not to income but the price of food and the gaps between income and the cost of food).

In Chapter 4, we said it was possible to set a minimum food spend for different family and household units within a system such as Universal Credit. It is also possible to set regional variations on a food basket to take account of regional price variations and food preferences. For example, the Consumer Council in Northern Ireland (2003) called for protection for vulnerable domestic water consumers (upon consultation about the introduction of a direct water and sewerage charge there) within which was the protection that 'If water is metered, low-income consumers might be protected by providing an amount of free or low cost water for all or by reserving an amount for less well-off consumers subject to a test of eligibility (means testing). This is the method used in Flanders, Belgium, where since 1997, the first 15 m^3 of water consumed per person in each Flemish household are provided free of charge'. So alongside our calls for a minimum essential food basket income standard within welfare spending, we ask that sanctions are not possible that would take the welfare amount payable to the client below this minimum protection. In other words, low-income consumers might be protected by providing

[4] Menu for Change website http://menuforchange.org.uk/what-we-do/, accessed 8 January 2018.

a minimum guaranteed welfare payment that ring-fences a minimum amount for essential food expenditure.

The welfare system can help people, and encourage and reward behaviours and it does need reforming and change; however, the current system and the path of travel seems more directed to punishing people. There is a need to consider the current moves to Universal Credit and the damage this is causing to people and their food choices (Royston 2017). Also, the various strands of help need to be integrated across departments, for example, the provision of school meals (Department for Education) and healthy eating initiatives such as Healthy Start (Department of Health). Adequate local discretionary budgets provide an opportunity for local authorities with their community planning powers to achieve some difference in this agenda.

So, there is need to move to advocacy which includes the unheard voices and social norms of the supposedly '*hard to be heard*'. This is not just the voice of users of food banks about their experiences but also their ideas about solutions. This involves a new food agenda to tackle stigma and dignity much like the '*Witness to Hunger*' initiative in the United States.[5] The need to develop a comprehensive anti-food poverty strategy is urgent. This could be the new 'Beveridge' report for the twenty fist century, appropriate given that 2017 was the 75th anniversary of the original Beveridge Report (Beveridge 1942). The potential exists to use the existing food bank network to advocate for change much in the same way as Fisher (2017) describes in his book on America by harnessing the good will and understanding of volunteers. Lobbying for change has to happen and there are various avenues for this, local government, national government, the developed administrations of Scotland and Northern Ireland, faith-based organisations and not least the media (Alemanno 2017).

Part of this approach to advocacy could entail a challenge to the changes that are happening to the food welfare system. As we noted in Chapter 2, the ICESCR declaration and the Convention on the Rights of the Child place a negative obligation on the UK Government <u>NOT</u> to do anything that prevents access to food. From this we can see that Universal Credit, with its implications for food affordability due to increased sanctions and removal of resources from the Welfare purse

[5] http://www.centerforhungerfreecommunities.org/our-projects/witnesses-hunger, accessed 8 January 2018.

alongside removal of free school meals from more than one million children, constitutes a breach of this negative obligation and should be legally tested.

Something must be done immediately to reduce chronic and acute reliance on emergency food aid. One solution is that payments should be made directly to households in poverty to adequately protect our vulnerable neighbours at source. It is simply too cost prohibitive *not* to take action. We need to act urgently and radically, and re-prioritise and re-allocate welfare spending for the greater and common good. This would require the reestablishment and adequate funding for local discretionary budgets, perhaps with a minimum food element built in. These allocations should also be ring fenced.

Measures of success could involve fewer food banks opening and lower food banks usage while we campaign for measures to measure food insecurity. We need to also measure or evaluate what works not just collect data on the problem: thirty years of measurement data from the United States and Canada have not prevented the situation getting worse. So we need to use routinely collected and publicly reported, government-endorsed data to identify progress made with this agenda. Food insecurity initiatives should have evaluation built-in (not bolted-on!).

Hunger is solvable if only we had the political will—the issue needs and deserves political leadership and championing; there is nothing more fundamental and emotive than food, nothing more undignified in not having access to what your neighbour has because you cannot afford or access it and having to access it through charity. All the points raised above need to be framed and driven by a right to food agenda.

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