

Living at the sharp end of socio-economic inequality

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Out for a walk with my youngest son when I noticed him wincing. I stopped him and he showed me that his shoes had come apart at the seams, so his feet were getting wet. I reminded him that he needs to tell me these things, and he said that it happened a while ago but he didn't want to worry me, as he didn't think I could afford to buy him new ones. He's right, but God that hurts to realise.

(Changing Realities)





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Counting for nothing?





Endemic / state-led insecurity (by design)

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



Living with inequality

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

(Angela, Benefit Changes & Larger Families Study)

Harmful shift to charitable and discretionary provision

Personally for me I am on Universal Credit. I am finding this extremely difficult to live on....I have no working cooker at present and I am concerned about that heading towards Christmas. I do have a microwave so it's not too bad. I did try 3 times to apply for a non repayable grant which is available but very hard to access and I [was] denied. It's awful as I am genuine and it's an appliance I need. When I phoned all those times I was demeaned and demoralised. **I didn't feel like a human. I didn't feel respected as I felt like a rat. It's a horrible feeling.**

(Charlotte, Covid Realities)



Multiple / overlapping relational harms

‘... the journal needs improving. I’d much prefer to be able to simply email one consistent person who knows me and my case. Sending a message on the journal feels like you’re sending it into the ether. I don’t know who it’s going to and if they ever get it. Sometimes I’ve found that what I want to communicate on the journal can not be discussed or answered through it. For someone who struggles with other forms of communication this is a big problem. **The journal often seems like simply a way for the DWP to send demands rather than a way for us to ask questions or ask for help. As soon as you do you’re signposted out of the communication.**’ (Nellie, Covid Realities)

Multiple / overlapping relational harms

'I never have any surplus left over and **that's with the £20 a week.**

What I now face is “what is there to cut back on or give up?” Internet, car? I need these as I live in a rural area and I need them for my work. So the next option is to cut back on heating or food ... Well we need to eat, so we'll have to cut back on the heating. We will just have to sit wrapped in blankets when we are eating at the table.'

'**I feel like our government isn't listening** to us or they truly don't care. The £20 cut will have a long lasting impact on our children and on our own mental and physical wellbeing.'

(Caroline, Covid Realities, October 2021)

Different futures?

- Agendas for policy change need to focus on the relational as well as the financial (and recognise their interconnectedness)
- Need to attend to the process of policymaking; as well as the policies themselves
- Work for incremental reforms, as well as the longer-term systemic change required
- Continued place for hope (within what often feels a hopeless context)





FOOD BANK

PLACE TO EAT

NEWSAG

PLAY HERE

COATS STILLE REQUIRED