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OPINION ARTICLE

The normalisation of Food Aid: What happened to feeding people well? [version 1; referees: awaiting peer review]

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Abstract

In the UK, food poverty has increased in the last 15 years and the food aid supply chain that has emerged to tackle it is now roughly 10 years old. In this time, we have seen the food aid supply chain grow at a rate that has astounded many. Recently that growth has been aided by a grant of £20m from a large supermarket chain. It appears institutionalisation is just around the corner, if not already here. It also appears that there is far greater emphasis on dealing with the symptoms as opposed to solving the root causes of the problem. As an opinion piece, this paper reflects on some of the prevalent issues, and suggests some ways forward.

Keywords

food poverty, food bank, food rights



This article is included in the [Sustainable Food Systems gateway](#).

Open Peer Review

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Corresponding author: Martin Caraher (m.caraher@city.ac.uk)**Author roles:** **Caraher M:** Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Resources, Software, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing; **Davison R:** Conceptualization, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Project Administration, Resources, Writing – Original Draft Preparation, Writing – Review & Editing**Competing interests:** No competing interests were disclosed.**Grant information:** The author(s) declared that no grants were involved in supporting this work.**Copyright:** © 2019 Caraher M and Davison R. This is an open access article distributed under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution Licence](#), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.**How to cite this article:** Caraher M and Davison R. **The normalisation of Food Aid: What happened to feeding people well? [version 1; referees: awaiting peer review]** Emerald Open Research 2019, 1:3 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/emeraldopenres.12842.1>)**First published:** 28 Jan 2019, 1:3 (<https://doi.org/10.12688/emeraldopenres.12842.1>)

Introduction

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)

So here we are in 2018, 76 years after the Beveridge Report of 1942, and children and families are going hungry and the government is using the crises to restructure the welfare state and to develop a new 'austerity localism' which is not fit for purpose (Taylor-Gooby, 2012). There is a lot of talk about purported solutions, such as Universal Credit and food banks. What is needed is a re-visitation to the principles of the Beveridge report and that of the founding fathers of the NHS which are 'we are all in this together', the guiding ethic of the gift relationship and the greater good (Titmuss, 1968). Charities providing free food can be seen as fine and noble but the right to food is a societal one and one enshrined in human rights legislation not charity provision (De Schutter, 2013). The UK is signatory to the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Waterstones: Amnesty International UK, 2013), and the growth of food banks is undermining the state's duty and obligation to respect, protect and fulfil the human right to food - both legally and morally.

We both work in the areas of food and food projects albeit from the perspectives of practice and academia, with between us 60 years of experience in these areas -we were young when we started. What we agree on is that we have never seen it so bad. There is a need for a grass roots response to the problems and for practitioners, academics and politicians to bring to public attention how dire the situation is with children and families going hungry (Scott *et al.*, 2018). One of us (RD) created and has led a good food organisation for 11 years, 'Can Cook' see Figure 1. Though this organisation, RD has taught over 15,000



Figure 1. Can Cook.

people to cook, developed and produced meals for schools and care homes, campaigned to feed hungry people well and, as part of food poverty work, distributed over 85,000 free nutritious meals. As a practitioner, RD has argued against the orthodoxy of the mainstream food aid movement and for a food supply system that is predicated on people's dignity, health and wellbeing, rather than their crisis; he has in his practice established alternative systems of food supply for communities. The other (MC) has worked on food poverty from an academic viewpoint and is distressed by the promotion of solutions to hunger as a one of logistics and charity as opposed to being seen as a (human) right (De Schutter, 2013).

The shame and indignity felt by individuals and their families who cannot afford or access food in a society where food is abundant is not acceptable (Anonymous, 2017; Garthwaite, 2016; (van der Horst *et al.*, 2014). While the presence of food banks might feel 'rather uplifting' to the likes of Jacob Rees-Moog, the MP for NE Somerset (BBC News, 2017), this is not a sentiment usually felt by those who are driven to use them. As RD has previously said:

#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.

Contrast this with comments from Michael Gove who said 'They've only got themselves to blame for making bad decisions' (Chorley, 2013). Even Jamie Oliver has admitted he does not understand food poverty but this did not stop him making the following comment:

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 (Deans, 2013).

By implication, 'the poor' are portrayed as feckless, referral to and use of food banks are now indicators of caring concern and according to some 'shows what a compassionate country we are'. Glaze & Richardson (2017) found that under UK governments between 2010–2016 food poverty was seen as primarily a failure of personal responsibility and identified primarily with the working class, based on the assumption that those in poverty make poor choices.

Making moral judgments about groups and communities is not helpful and it serves to perpetuate an ignorance that many are willing to accept as the truth. We beg to differ and agree with the point that Winne makes when he said we should 'no longer praise the growth of food banks 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, 2008).

The [S]ins of food banks

We do not intend to go into detail on the workings of food banks in this piece as we assume the reader has a working knowledge of the UK situation. In summary there are over 2000 food banks operating in the UK, roughly split equally between being Trussell Trust franchises and independent 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. FareShare do not operate food banks or pantries but act a 'wholesaler' providing food to food banks and other food charities, which is sourced from surpluses in the food system.

So what is wrong with food banks? Poppendieck's seven deadly 'ins', set out in Table 1 below, show the weaknesses of the current system of food banking (Poppendieck, 1998).

FareShare claims that the use of surplus food that would otherwise go to waste is appropriate. FareShare reported that they received 13,552 tonnes food between March 2016 and March 2017, this provided 28 million meals in 1,300 towns and cities through 6,723 charities with an estimated value to the charities of £22.4 million (see FareShare presentation). Using Poppendieck's model this can be seen to be both inefficient and often inappropriate. It is also an operational model that appears to be over-claiming its impact. In 2008, Alexander and Smaje identified that of the foodstuffs FareShare redirects, 68% ends up on people's plates, 58% in people's stomachs and 40% is returned to the waste stream (Alexander & Smaje, 2008). More recently, and taking a practitioner perspective as a FareShare customer, Can Cook, a Liverpool based food enterprise, ended up disposing of over 60% of all foodstuffs delivered, due to the restrictions of the *use before* dates or

because the products could not be converted into meals (Can Cook, 2017). Both studies indicate that surplus food products are much less likely to convert into meals and large amounts of additional food waste is being transferred from the private sector into and at cost of the third and public sectors.

Poverty, Universal Credit and the 'feckless poor'

A Food Foundation report found in excess of 4 million children were living in poverty and could not afford a healthy diet (Scott *et al.*, 2018). Universal Credit (UC) is a new government scheme to rationalise a number of existing welfare schemes under one payment. This has led to the impoverishment of families and along with a further £10 billion of planned cuts to the welfare budget the situation is about to get worse for many. These are not branded as cuts, as they are about raising entitlement levels and removing some from the benefit. This will result in a fall of entitlements of £5.5 billion, thus leading to increases in childhood poverty and relative poverty (Hood & Waters, 2017). Research shows that the main users of the Trussell Trust network were from groups who have been most affected by recent welfare reforms and the move to the new system of UC (Loopstra & Lalor, 2017).

Due to the way the system of UC is being rolled out, individuals end up being sanctioned for various breaches of the regulations; this results in many households facing inconsistent income and/or financial ups and downs with many being one paycheck or welfare payment away from crises (Hills, 2017; Royston, 2017). It is tough out there for many individuals, families and communities. Armstrong (2018) documents how changes in welfare and health care are impacting on many; he tells the story of DIY dentistry. We used to say the difference between the UK and the USA was the provision of free health care, and while that is still free at the point of delivery access and changes to the way dentists are paid to provide a service has made it harder to access for some.

Table 1. Poppendieck's seven deadly 'ins'.

The seven 'ins' + inequity	How they manifest
Insufficiency	Depends on individual donations or industry food surplus not related to demand but supply driven.
Inappropriateness	Charity to people and dependency on food donations/surplus food. 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, opening hours. Assumes that the charities supplying food through luncheon clubs etc. are meeting the need. There is a hidden or unmet need. Gatekeepers control access to the system.
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. Food banks are not in every town or village and opening hours may mean they are not accessible to all.

The research indicates that families and households in poverty firstly turn to community and family networks for help, then to other sources such as pay-day loans before turning to charity (Booth, 2018; Getting By?, 2015). Networks are not being supported or developed to continue to support families and communities, not only is the welfare state being reformed and cut-back but services such as education, health and childcare are also suffering similar cuts. Of course many see the problems as being about the mismanagement of resources at the individual and family levels and many see the solution to this as being located in the provision of cooking and budgeting classes again tackling the symptoms rather than the causes (Caraher, 2018). We both have spent decades working and writing on cooking and see it as an important skill, but people are not in poverty because they cannot or do not cook, they mostly don't cook as they are living in impoverished situations.

The data shows that the 'rich' are less skilled at cooking, but of course they don't have to as they can buy their way into health and healthier food (Adams *et al.*, 2015; Caraher & Lang, 1999). Poverty may, however, be preventing those on low-incomes from cooking. A nutritionist from Public Health England commenting on the 4 million in poverty said: *'This report suggests £6 per day for an adult; we are currently spending about the same amount eating poorly'* (Butler, 2018). We would argue that this misses the point of living in poverty and worrying about income. It is not just about not having enough food or money for food next week, it is about a continuous and on-going pressure of what and how to eat. Such entreaties to change behaviour and manage within existing resources also misses the point about people's ability to shop well and conveniently. A recent report from the Social Market Foundation, indicates important limitations such as:

- Food accounts for up to 15% of the total budget for the poorest 10% of the UK population; and
- 8% of deprived areas in England and Wales are 'food deserts' (Corfe, 2018).

This is similar to the findings from the Fabian Society which showed that there is a 'poverty premium', with those on low-incomes often having to spend more on accessing and cooking food (Tait, 2015).

From some other perspectives the introduction of UC can be conceived as a declaration of war on 'the poor' (Caraher, 2018). The principles underpinning UC view those not in work as 'not deserving' and the sanctioning of people and their subsequent removal from benefits are based on their not doing enough to seek work. This is part of wider campaign to discredit welfare provision as frivolous and welfare recipients as incompetent (Geiger, 2016; Hills, 2017). The numbers in work are rising but this work is often associated with part time and poor employment practices (e.g. zero-hour contracts) and lack of security, which UC is not fit to deal with. The problem seems to be an old-fashioned view of employment as full time and continuous.

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. Statistics compiled by the (DEFRA, 2016) show that those on low-incomes, between 2007 and 2010, adapted by trading down to cheaper products and saved an average of 4%. The percentage spend on food is highest among households with the lowest twenty per cent of earnings/income (16%); after housing, power and fuel food is the largest item of household expenditure (DEFRA, 2017). Far from being feckless the evidence shows that those on low-incomes have adapted their diets in the face of austerity (DEFRA, 2012). The (DEFRA, 2016) report stated that:

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 (page 18).

Now trading down, for many, means accessing a food bank.

Families and communities are the points of first resource not food banks yet current policy puts these under pressure. Eight out of ten people in food poverty do not use a food bank, so where do they go (Caraher, 2018)? The problem is seeing poverty as a single issue, there is a need to address poverty and food poverty in a cross-sectoral manner and in doing so, develop solutions focused on people's dignity (The Scottish Government, 2016). In this respect questions arise as to the extent that food banks or food charity to be appropriate responses, and it is to this issue we now turn.

Inappropriateness - Food banks as charity

While meeting a need for food, food banks can be classified as successful failures (Lorenz, 2012; Ronson & Caraher, 2016). They are successes in the public eye as they seem to offer a solution, failures because they cannot address the roots of food poverty. As the UN Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights said in his interim report on the UK:

The voluntary sector has done an admirable job of picking up the slack for those government functions that have been cut or de facto outsourced. One pastor told me that because the government has cut services to the bone, his church is providing meals paid for by church members. But that work is not an adequate substitute for the government's obligations. Food banks cannot step in to do the government's job, and teachers—who very well may be relying on food banks themselves—shouldn't be responsible for ensuring their students have clean clothes and food to eat. (Alston, 2018, p 15)

Food banks and food charity do not address the fundamental socio-economic causes of poverty nor why the food system is producing surplus or waste (Riches & Silvasti, 2014). Riches and Silvasti have called nations that use food banks and donations as a major provider to low-income people and communities 'food bank nations'. This withdrawal of the state from welfare leads to the re-establishment of the concepts of the deserving and undeserving poor, as food is not perceived a right. This can result in

more indignity and inequity. (De Schutter, 2013), 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 (page 9).

Models based on charity and more waste/surplus in the food system are expanding (Caraher & Furey, 2017). Recently, the website *foodbanking.org* claimed, ‘hunger is often not the problem, its logistics’. The implied direction of travel here is: if only we could get more surplus food, we can stop hunger. Joining in, we now see Feeding Britain and Church Action on Poverty (CAP) both favouring surplus/waste models. One example is the pantry model led by CAP. It is a membership model that allows members to purchase the same or similar food products supplied by FareShare and given away free by food banks. Essentially, charging poorer people for donated food.

Successful failures are built into the model around more waste food for more ‘poor people’, so success for the industry in terms of good publicity and disposal of their waste, a failure as it is, is inappropriate – ‘leftover food for leftover people’ (Caraher & Furey, 2017) and nutritionally inadequate for those in receipt of the food – all dressed up as a solution. In a presentation by FareShare they stated that ‘when we saw the problem of UK hunger we found a solution. It’s simple really’. The location of the solution as one of logistics and getting surplus or waste food to people belies the indignity of having to rely on charity for basic needs.

Like in the USA, the UK charity sector welcomes new alliances. The links between the largest UK food aid charities and the food industry are becoming bigger business, reference the £20m Asda donation to FareShare and Trussell Trust to expand their logistics and strengthen their food bank networks. According to the two charities in question, these are models based on the increased supply of surplus/waste food from the private sector into the food aid chain (ASDA, 2018). Why should we be concerned about the links between food aid charities and the food industry? Fisher (2017) draws our attention to the increasing number of links with the food industry such as FareShare’s links with Coca Cola; where a donation was made to the 2016 Christmas appeal when individuals’ bought a Coca Cola, this was a move beyond using surplus or waste food (see [here](#)).

As we were writing this piece an example came from the US where a trade war has resulted in tariffs by China being imposed on US food products. This means that there is a surplus of pork, apples, cheese, figs, peanut butter and orange juice. The Trump Administration will buy these products worth \$1.2 billion and distribute them to food banks. This means that food banks will receive 950 million pounds (weight) on top of the 700 million

pounds they usually handle. The food bank trade association, Feeding America, is calling for \$200 to \$300 million to pay for distributing the excess burden of food donations (Calvert, 2018). Marion Nestle in her commentary on this asks should we not ‘Ensure that food banks are unnecessary?’

Media reporting appears to treat food banks and users of food banks differently from other welfare and dependant recipients, this is possibly due to the volunteer and dominant faith-based nature of the endeavour (Wells & Caraher, 2014; Wells & Caraher, 2017). This allows both FareShare and the Trussell Trust as the largest food aid charities, to retain an emotive ‘high ground’ regarding their service output. In addition, the supermarket/church/charity supply alliance, is convincing the general public that the job of food poverty is being tackled. Collection points in supermarkets/churches for those who can give to feel better about themselves are creating a disconnect between the general public and the lived realities of UK food poverty.

Food quality and Food Inequality

Food poverty refers to a healthy diet rather than just a lack of food (Ravillion, 2002). The food aid parcel offered by mainstream food banks is at odds with people’s need for healthy and socially acceptable diets, often providing up to 20 items of processed goods to feed a family. Moreover, what can no longer be ignored are the harmful consequences of insufficient food and or food of poor nutritional value, particularly for children (Child Poverty Action Group & Royal College of Paediatrics and Child Health, 2017)

In 2010, The Trussell Trust had just 78 food banks, now collectively the entire food aid network comprises of 2,009 food banks (May, 2018). Within this growth, according to the Trussell Trust, they gave out 1,332,952 3-day food parcels in 12-months (2017/18 accounting year). What links most food aid provision and the food aid parcels dispensed is the lack of quality and social inequality of the food. There is a need to link dietary and nutritional quality with social appropriates and meal preparation (Caraher & Furey, 2018; Hughes & Prayogo, 2018).

It is estimated that as much as 50% of a regular food aid parcel will remain unused by the family receiving it because it cannot be used to create meals (Can Cook, 2016). The same food parcel does not cater for specific dietary requirements so where do people go who are vegetarians or suffer intolerances? Most food aid parcels are composed of processed and often ultra-processed goods, largely edible only as individual products and as a barrier to family eating. The same parcel is made up of products categorised as being part of the so called ‘Western diet’ (Caraher & Furey, 2018). A diet consisting of products containing high-levels of added sugar, processed meats, minus vegetables, fruits and wholegrains, is a diet that can lead to negative health consequences, e.g. obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and cancer (Monteiro *et al.*, 2018).

We know that when people are poor and hungry, they have less cognitive control and their performance drops, poor nutrition and forms of hunger leave a persons’ brain impaired (Mullainathan & Shafir, 2014). Yet when dealing with the

benefit system and a poor waged economy, hungry people are expected to more than cope, they are expected to thrive and this whilst being 'gifted' some of the worst food products the modern food system produces. The food aid movement has a responsibility to step aside from reinforcing the worst of modern food habits and move onto a platform that actively strives to promote food quality, food equality and regardless of a person's circumstances.

Academic engagement/Third Sector projects and poverty porn

Too often, what we call the 'poverty porn' narrative points towards the media and others outside the food aid chain (Garthwaite, 2016). Maybe now it's time to look inside.

Academics are themselves now engaged in a game of 'poverty porn' providing descriptions of what it is like to live in poverty or to use a food bank. There are numerous studies, sometimes funded by food banking agencies, focused on the same 'lived experience'. Sure, some of this was required in the early stages of the current crisis to see what it is like, now it is expounded in the popular press and same academic literature with little real understanding of what it is like to live in poverty and struggle. This misses the point of locating food banks within an unacceptable framework of delivering 'poor food to poor people'. We call for academic research that takes a more critical look at the framing of food aid in the UK and beyond. That proposes more radical solutions that are co-created with those experiencing food poverty that deliver healthier diets.

The same or similar applies to the Third Sector, who are drawing down large amounts of funding, often enrolling academia, in programmes that appear to be more relevant to the on-going running of the organisations themselves rather than wanting to protect the health of people who are hungry (Anonymous, 2017).

An alternative case study

So can we offer a practical solution? RD leads Can Cook and their Good Food Areas (GFA) model, Figure 2 below. This looks to change the direction of travel by offering a food support model that trades locally (but can expand nationally) and is wholly about people's wellbeing, nutrition, choice, and importantly, job creation. This is not dissimilar to the model of a local closed economic system proposed by organisations such as the Ellen MacArthur Foundation.

The GFA model produces and distributes food as a social enterprise. The type of social enterprise we favour is the difference between charity and justice (see Robert Egger's website), it is entirely a product of social need (Davison & Heap, 2014). The GFA model is locked into raising the capacity and aspirations of local people. Figure 2 depicts how food can be transported from farms directly onto peoples' plates, with minimal waste and generating social impact that implicitly understands people as they struggle with disadvantage.

Translated the model operates by;

- Recycling surplus farm food with the purpose to produce meals.
- Inviting surplus food aid suppliers to channel usable goods into the production stream.
- Removing all random donations and mitigating food waste.
- Producing fresh meals to be eaten in schools, any other community facilities and in homes.
- Anchoring schools and their food consumption for wider community benefit.
- Tackling 'food deserts' by providing a local retail option.
- Allowing people to shop locally with or without income.



Figure 2. Good Food Area.

- Supplying fresh meals into food banks to offer hungry people choice
- Creating employment throughout the food distribution chain.

Importantly, it is a model that can scale up to sit within a town or city or scale down to fit into a village. Clearly such an approach needs funding and proper evaluation measures built in.

Conclusions

Political activist and musician Tom Morello says that '*Hunger Is a Crime*' (Blistein, 2012) and like Martin Luther King, Jr we believe that '*[T]he arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice*'. Here the long arc needs to be shortened as people suffer and there are societal consequences, such as more ill-health and distress. We suggest that there are solutions to poverty and food poverty but we need a co-ordinated approach and a broader approach than just looking at food within charity provision and the effectiveness, efficiency debates within the foodbanking system (Garrone *et al.*, 2014). This needs to be accompanied by public support, as currently the ways in which welfare is talked about and the descriptions of those in receipt of welfare is negative. Official data tends to promulgate the myth that the majority of the welfare budget is spent on unemployment and tax credits - in fact only about one in every £14 is spent on social security, employment and tax credits. Pensions absorb, by far, the greatest percentage of the welfare budget. Often official descriptions of poverty and welfare are an attempt to undermine public trust and perceptions of welfare provision (Geiger, 2016).

As the food aid movement grows, does it allow the political 'right' to claim that the partnership between the private sector and non-profit organisations, rather than the government, can best solve the hunger problem? (Fisher, 2017). Politicians, on the right of the political spectrum, 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, despite limited evidence for this (Hills, 2017). We note that is not a matter of traditional Labour versus Conservative political fault lines but one that crosses party lines.

One of the problems facing those proposing alternatives to food bank provision is that the public perception of food banks is that they are providing a service which is necessary and based on volunteer labour and a sense of charity (Anonymous, 2017). But, the replacement of a right to food and the guarantee by the state to uphold that right in favour of a move to charity does not bode well. Food banks and food charities possess a limited ability to answer the social and material needs of people.

In '*austerity Britain*' as severe cuts in welfare provision make the life of many people precarious many people across the UK face a new reality of poverty and social exclusion (Anonymous, 2017). The growth of the charity sector is not a way forward in tackling food poverty and food exclusion. There are many new initiatives developing a way forward through food democracy

with people having a say in their food choices and involvement based on community ownership and mutuality. Some of these have merged from food banks not satisfied with the mere provision of charity (Owen, 2014).

Any campaign/research focus should not be on how to make food parcels more healthy and nutritious but to ensure families have adequate income to afford a healthy diet. (Caraher & Furey, 2018) showed that under current welfare incomes it is not possible to purchase a consensually agreed and nutritionally adequate food-basket.

For those in receipt of welfare, there are two issues which need to be tackled to address food poverty: the first is the restoration and recognition that existing benefit levels are inadequate to access a healthy or socially acceptable diet; the second area that requires attention is lowering the gap between incomes and food prices. Although personally we feel that UC should be abandoned. Discussions about the social and nutritionally adequacy of food bank parcels distract from the bigger picture of poverty and food poverty.

Changes need to be reconfigured for the times but the principles of caring concern, the greater good and the right of individuals and families to food, are universal and timeless. Above all, we need leadership which looks beyond the provisions of emergency food via food banks. Where is this? Our contention is that leadership is lacking in both the academic and practice fields.

The right to food is more than that contained in Article 22 of the Human Rights Declaration (Waterstones: Amnesty International UK, 2013), it also incorporates feelings of justice and concern for your fellow citizens. There is a loss of empathy in British Society and this is an issue of concern. This is currently missing in the policy narrative and in leadership to deliver a long-term solution to food poverty. There is an argument that the current welfare changes occurring under UC are in breach of the terms of a letter sent to countries by the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that requires that austerity measures should not contradict human rights (Caraher & Furey, 2018, see chapters 2 and 5).

Food projects were more inclusive in the 1990s and 2000s, serving food that could be eaten communally or as meals (Caraher & Cowburn, 2004; Caraher & Dowler, 2007). Now most of the activity has been taken over by the foodbanking movement and it's here we should act with caution. Food banks and the larger food aid charities have little expertise, yet talk of solutions to food poverty and being 'nutritional'. Their story and direction is of logistics (as this paper has highlighted) and franchised growth (food banks). Good food and good food knowledge do not feature. It is a story and direction that requires quick and radical change, if the tide of hunger is to be stopped and people are to be respectfully, fed well.

There is a need to move to solutions which include the voices of those impacted by food poverty. This means not just looking to hear their experiences and research on them but to include

them as experts in food poverty. People want to find ways out of poverty, so there is a need for regenerative models that move beyond charity and include the employment for people that have previously been hungry. All this needs to be accompanied by research and evaluation of what delivers sustainable, equitable and socially appropriate food on people's tables. Research needs to link national changes in welfare provision with what the local can achieve. The ability of the third sector to address hardship as a result of national policy is limited and research needs to contextualise this within a framework of 'austerity localism' (Dagdeviren *et al.*, 2018). Finally, research

needs to focus on proximate causes and solutions to these, not a band-aid or research that simply props up or expands the existing system by making it more efficient, but possibly less just.

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