

Poverty and Food Banks in Wales

This seminar focuses on the findings of original research on the food bank phenomenon in Wales. It will contextualise the rise of food banks in a society where relative poverty has proved difficult to tackle and voluntary welfare provision has been increasingly institutionalised replacing more traditional state approaches. This has implications for our future vision of a welfare state post-Brexit in an era of increasing populism.

There is no doubt that poverty has been of growing concern throughout the UK given current austerity measures. This research is looking at the experience of food poverty and has sought to track this *experience* through two methods.

The first method explores the food bank experience as evidenced through the growth of the 'food bank'. A marker for the experience of poverty, and a potential sign of the times, a food bank is a place whereby people experiencing some form of difficulty – poverty, sudden loss of income/employment can claim food assistance in the form of three days' worth of free food, and thus the growth and experience of food poverty has been marked by the presence, use and proliferation of food banks.

The first Welsh food bank opened in Newport in 1998 followed by the opening of the Prestatyn food bank in 2005. The Trussell Trust operates the UK largest collective network of UK based food banks, and 2008 saw the opening of their first food bank in Wales. By the end of the Labour Government in 2010 food banks had grown to a total of 16. The change of government also brought about changes in the way welfare is administered, as a result poverty rose and with it so did the number of food banks. Between June 2010 and December 2015 the number of food banks grew by 141, bringing the total of food banks to 157 throughout Wales alone.

The second method explores the 'felt' experience and understanding of food poverty. This is discussed by the two distinct groups involved with food bank delivery – service providers and service users. Both groups express their experience food poverty in different ways, however, the two group also express their mutual anguish at changes made through austerity and the way in which welfare provisions are being transformed.

Opportunity to donate to Foodbank: We will be collecting for the Cardiff Foodbank at the event, please do bring a contribution if you would like to.