



Poverty and social exclusion in Wales: lived experience evidence

Introduction

The views and voices of people with lived experience of poverty and social exclusion are of critical importance in the development of anti-poverty interventions and strategies. Both people who have personal experience of poverty and social exclusion and those who have professional experience of working with people experiencing these issues can provide useful lived experience insights related to service provision and policy implementation.

The inclusion of lived experience evidence in the development of policy is important for ensuring that policy plans are based on an understanding of how policies are and might be viewed, responded to and experienced by the people they are aiming to support.

There is a clear need to increase the involvement of those with lived experience in studies of poverty and social exclusion and policy development in Wales.

This briefing summarises the findings of a review of qualitative evidence on lived experience of poverty and social exclusion in Wales. Qualitative evidence allows for richer, more open and flexible communication of people's experiences in their own words compared with quantitative approaches which often necessitate predefined categories through which to understand people's experiences.

Research questions

The review addressed the following questions:

- What are the lived experiences of people who are socially excluded and/or in poverty in Wales?
- What are the key implications for policy and practice in Wales?
- What are the main gaps in the lived experience evidence base in Wales?

Findings

The lived experience evidence reviewed, while limited, demonstrates clearly that experiences of poverty and social exclusion are not limited to discrete areas of people's lives. People who reported being in one type of poverty (e.g. fuel poverty or food insecurity) were also likely to be experiencing deprivation and exclusion in other areas of their lives, with one type of deprivation often contributing to and reinforcing others.

The evidence reviewed also demonstrates that many people with lived experience of poverty and social exclusion had experienced these issues across their lives, often experiencing deprivation in different ways at different times.

Lived experience evidence often reveals the emotional and psychological dimensions of poverty and social exclusion which can affect how people interact with support and services – shame, stigma and pride often act as a barrier to accessing services.

Those with lived experience often highlight the impact of the structural drivers of poverty and

social exclusion as low income, poor quality and insecure work, and changing or insufficient social security and living costs, which in turn lead to broader financial and non-financial forms of social exclusion.

At times personal and professional views differ and contradict each other, for example in terms of understanding the behaviour and motivations of people in poverty and/or social exclusion. This can have implications for the way that services and programmes are able to work with people in poverty or who are social excluded.

Evidence gaps

Gaps in the evidence base have resulted in more robust answers to the research questions in relation to some dimensions of poverty and social exclusion compared with others. Framing discrepancies present a key issue to the identification of relevant evidence as many studies which explore lived experiences of poverty and/or social exclusion are often not framed in these terms which can lead to them being unintentionally excluded from searches.

Furthermore, many organisations that engage with people with lived experience of poverty and social exclusion do not produce formal evidence, presenting a further limiting factor.

As such, a lack of lived experience evidence relating to people's experiences of poverty and social exclusion remains a key gap in our understanding of poverty and social exclusion in Wales.

Conclusion

The evidence reviewed supports a strategy which adopts a holistic and multi-dimensional understanding of poverty, such as 'social exclusion'. Such a strategy should focus on tackling the underlying structural drivers of poverty, supplemented by interventions targeted at specific elements of people's experiences of poverty, such as fuel poverty or food insecurity.

Overall, the review demonstrates a significant gap in the lived experience evidence base and that there is a clear need to increase the involvement of those with lived experience in studies of poverty and social exclusion and related policy development in Wales.

Find out more

For the full report see Carter, I. (2022). *Poverty and social exclusion in Wales: Review of lived experience evidence*. Cardiff: Wales Centre for Public Policy.

About the Wales Centre for Public Policy

Here at the Centre, we collaborate with leading policy experts to provide ministers, the civil service and Welsh public services with high quality evidence and independent advice that helps them to improve policy decisions and outcomes.

Funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Welsh Government, the Centre is

based at Cardiff University and a member of the UK's What Works Network.

For further information contact:

Dan Bristow

+44 (0)29 2087 5345

dan.bristow@wcpp.org.uk

Wales Centre for Public Policy

Cardiff University, Sbarc/Spark, Maindy Road, Cardiff CF24 4HQ



www.wcpp.org.uk



029 2087 5345



info@wcpp.org.uk



@WCfPP



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