

Hunger

In the UK



CHANGING THE RULES

Findings from participatory research
and policy development

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INTRODUCTION

The Hunger in the UK (HUK) research project is a multi-year mixed-methods research programme delivered in partnership with Ipsos and food banks in the Trussell Trust network. In this first year of the project, 2022/23, two comprehensive and representative surveys have taken place: one of people referred to food banks in the Trussell Trust network; the second, an online survey of the UK general population. Alongside these, in-depth interviews have taken place with 50 people who completed the food banks survey.

This data has provided a rich body of information on the scale and drivers of food insecurity and food bank use in the UK in 2022. To make sense of this data, and shape what the solutions could be in tackling the drivers of food bank need, the perspectives and participation of people who have needed to access emergency food was integral. To this end, a participatory pilot strand of the HUK project was developed, in line with the Trussell Trust strategy to increase participatory practice within our work and refine and build on our approaches and activities with lived experience partners.

This report gives an overview of this work and shares the outcomes of four participatory policy-development workshops that took place across the UK in 2022/23, named the ‘Changing the Rules’ project. As such, this report forms part of a suite of outputs in relation to the HUK project. For analysis and discussion of the quantitative and qualitative strands of the research please see [Hunger in the UK](#), where you’ll find reports on Hunger in the UK, Hunger in Scotland, Hunger in Northern Ireland and Hunger in Wales, and a policy briefing for the key policy implications that have come out of this work.

ABOUT THE ‘CHANGING THE RULES’ PROJECT

Between November 2022 and January 2023, four participatory policy-development workshops took place across the UK. These workshops were collaboratively designed in an intensive session in Manchester in October 2022, by [Legislative and Forum Theatre](#) practitioners, Katy Rubin and Dan Boyden, and facilitators from the Together for Change Panel: Jill, John and Laura (for more information on the facilitators, the Together for Change Panel, and the Legislative Theatre method, see Appendix C). From the very start the project prioritised shared leadership and facilitation capacity-building alongside policy development.

What did we do at each workshop?

- We played games to test our thinking on how the rules and assumptions we have been taught can be changed, and that there are many ways to see one situation.
- Next, we reflected on the survey findings from the HUK research via an embodied Image Theatre exercise: Participants created physical images in response to what they had heard. (Before each workshop, the staff at each food bank had been involved in choosing which themes were most relevant to their community). These images led to discussion in small groups about specific ways the statements impact on individuals and communities.
- Participants then created two newly devised scenes reflecting their feelings and experience of the discussion. Across the four locations we saw a wide range of scenarios including unacceptable responses when reporting unsafe housing conditions; stigma, discrimination, and a lack of empathy within the social security system; benefits sanctions being applied frequently and causing serious harm to income levels and quality of life; stigma and shame around visiting food banks; and access and design issues with the social security system, particularly regarding PIP assessments and applying for Universal Credit (see appendix B).
- Participants then engaged in what's called a 'lightning forum' in which audience members improvised multiple ideas in the scene to try to change the rules to improve the situation, leading to an analysis of barriers to change and opportunities for new policies or practices.
- Finally, participants transformed these improvisations into tangible and creative policy recommendations and voted on their priorities for action. It was a lot to cover in four hours, and participants worked hard, leaving feeling motivated and connected to one another through this shared experience.

Who was involved?

This was a small pilot allowing for four workshops in total. We made sure one took place in each of England, Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland, and that at least one urban and one rural location was involved. Each food bank influenced the design of the workshop, by choosing which research and insight from the quantitative and qualitative strands of Hunger in the UK would be most relevant to their community and should be shared, and they worked hard

to recruit participants with a diverse range of experiences. In total 42 people participated across the four locations.

Reflections from the co-facilitators

'I have loved working this project with Wandsworth foodbank. I found the people taking part was so honest. It was just heart-breaking hearing what people are doing to survive and basically live. I have loved working with the team and hope we can expand to more foodbanks including mine at Highbridge. Thank you for allowing me to be a part of a life changing project'.

- *John, co-facilitator and Together for Change panel member*

'Working on the Changing the Rules UK has been amazing for me. I found it very interesting how quickly people started to open up with each other as they had never met before and having some real conversations about the issues in their area. It's been such a pleasure to have the opportunity to be involved'

- *Laura, co-facilitator and Together for Change panel member.*

'Legislative Theatre provides a powerful arena through which to explore our encounters with punitive policies that exacerbate the ability to live life with dignity and freedom from the torment of financial worry. I was curious to understand the process of Legislative Theatre and learn how to deliver a workshop for myself. In this way, my learned experience is sustainable as I am able to transfer my facilitation skills to my own community projects and further afield.

Though there were many inspirational moments resulting from the Kirkintilloch food bank workshop, a highlight for me was witnessing the attendees becoming focused, animated and awakened to the idea that their everyday experiences are truly valuable. They realised that, together with the other lived experience voices raised across the four nations, their seemingly singular contribution is in fact part of a potent collective.

Through Hunger in the UK, this collective voice is calling for policies that allow positive transformation of our daily lives; contributing to a future that answers hope and dispels current suffering. In Kirkintilloch, as in all the other food bank workshops, we began building solidarity'

- *Jill, co-facilitator and Together for Change panel member.*

THE PROBLEMS DRIVING FOOD BANK USE, IDENTIFIED BY PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

‘If it wasn’t for the food bank most of us would not be where we are now, and that’s not how it should be.’

‘Social security doesn’t lead to security and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) doesn’t lead to independence’

Each workshop involved using prompts from the wider Hunger in the UK research related to the social security system, housing, disability, and mental health (see part 3 of the [Hunger in the UK report](#) ‘What are the primary drivers of Hunger in the UK?’ for more detail). In this section, we provide a summary of the problems identified by participants that are driving food bank use, along with sharing some quotes from participants explaining their experiences.

Participants told us:

Universal Credit does not stretch to meet the cost of living, and the crisis is affecting people’s mental health. One participant talked about washing her clothes at 2am because of off peak pricing, meaning she isn’t getting any proper sleep. People feel more isolated, less confident, and distressed by not being able to protect children from hardship.

- *‘It’s hard as a parent to not allow children to turn on the heating, or some of the lights in the house, or have proper showers, this shouldn’t be the case, I can’t cope no more.’*
- *‘I’m waiting for the sound of the beep of the electric and the gas meter, the social supermarket and the food banks are literally my lifeline.’*
- *‘People are being forced to choose between feeding their children or paying the rent.’*
- *‘I’m sacrificing food, so my daughter eats well.’*
- *‘You have to deal with everything on your own.’*

Workshop participants felt that the social security system is bureaucratic at best, broken at worst. People struggle to understand what they are entitled to

in the first place. it can feel impossible to speak to a real person on the phone, and then you get passed from pillar to post. One person's bank details were deleted accidentally from the system and they did not receive payment on time as a result. Another raised the fact that even though their benefits were cut off 8 hours after they went into prison, they had to reapply when coming out of prison instead of automatically restarting. Deductions and sanctions are inflexible and damaging. Another person found themselves in arrears after the introduction of the benefit cap, leading to eviction and a move into temporary accommodation, and said 'this is happening [around us] on a daily basis'.

- 'It's difficult to access advocacy or advice; and existing support services are overwhelmed.'
- 'You have to kick down the door to get help, even when you do that the people don't listen, just knowing where to go isn't enough if the people there aren't wanting to help you, it makes you feel worthless as you get passed on again and again.'
- 'I'm never speaking with the same person, there's no consistency.'

Without internet access there is usually no practical way of doing the paperwork required. People discussed the 'negligence' of the system when people are sanctioned for not updating their journal which is often because they don't have phones to access the internet, instead prioritising bills and food.

- 'Just a 10-minute UC appointment when there is so much going on that you need to discuss - and then you're told to go and 'look at your journal' but you can't afford the internet.'
- People are tired of being told about places to go to for free internet - they 'shouldn't have to do that'.

The social security system can feel dehumanising, lacking a sense of customer service. People feel unheard and exhausted by having to advocate for action without any results. People are upset by the attitude of overburdened staff who they have encountered who are rude, dismissive, and their first response is to say no or punish, rather than trying to support. One person felt that staff didn't even know the policies and chose to sanction them instead of trying to help. Others discussed how there is a sense of standardisation, or lack of flexibility - if you don't fit into a certain box, they 'don't know what to do with you.'

- ‘Forms are black and white, but a large amount of people fit in the grey area... if not exactly right, they look for every opportunity to push back or hold up’.
- ‘They don’t have anything to offer, so they just have to shut the conversation down.’
- ‘It feels like they want you to disappear and go away.’
- ‘I feel dismissed even when I have jumped through all the hoops.’
- ‘Hitting rock bottom isn’t good enough.’
- ‘We are just a name and a number.’
- ‘We all have our own capabilities and abilities, but the system puts us down.’
- ‘We are fighting a system that is old and not fit for purpose.’
- ‘You’re guilty until proven innocent.’
- ‘It feels like the system is designed to erode the standard of living.’
- ‘People are ground down’ at the point of contact and it is ‘hard to pick up the phone in the first place’.
- ‘Mental Health support is a disgrace - it comes across like agency staff have no understanding, speaking to you like it’s a business environment.’
- ‘It is expected that you follow a certain way of life - they don’t want to know if you have mental health problems.’
- ‘Asking for help is the hardest thing to do and if the first point of contact for us is a system that doesn’t make us feel safe, that’s not right’.

Accessing disability benefits is particularly difficult. People brought up the fact that a doctor’s assessment is required, but there are long waiting times for those appointments. It can also be very difficult to record a change in health with the system. Some people were also frustrated with the idea that private companies could be profiting from the social security system. It can feel like Personal Independence Payment (PIP) assessors are trying to find reasons to exclude applicants, or to ‘catch you out’ on the form, or that there might be quotas behind the scenes influencing how many people can access PIP. What is important here is that it all feels very untransparent.

- ‘When you’re off work sick, you don’t get any support, this adds to the stress, you’re then penalised for missing payments which tips the scale and pushes people deeper into poverty.’
- ‘What happens to people with mental health issues who aren’t able to get to their case? If you answer the door you can be penalised because you’re then made out as not having enough of a disability.’
- ‘If you can answer PIP assessment questions or even answer the phone on time, they can say you don’t really have anxiety and disqualify you for support.’
- ‘You become defined by your disability. The system disables you.’
- ‘When have a medical condition - they don’t want to provide any assistance to your recovery process’
- ‘When supporting someone who is vulnerable the system won’t join the dots’

It can be difficult to know where to access support - you really have to dig.

Where there is support, it is highly valued. The negative portrayal of benefits in the media adds to a reluctance to seek support. Many people said their mental health was negatively impacted by this culture of stigma, including embarrassment about visiting a food bank too close to home. Once the food bank was accessed, people felt a huge amount of support, and were concerned that food banks were the only place they felt a sense of support and togetherness in their communities.

- ‘We see neighbourhoods but not always communities’
- ‘If it wasn’t for the food bank most of us would not be where we are now, and that’s not how it should be.’

There isn’t a bridge back into work. One person had a medical condition and wanted to get back to work - but felt there was ‘no stepping stone for this’. There is also a significant loss of money from UC due to the 55% taper rate when starting to work and people worried that they would be worse off because of this. In addition, the carers allowance is found insufficient, and that there is a lack of support for carers transitioning back to work after the death or end of illness of the person they had been caring for.

A safe place to call home: housing is too often inadequate, causing trauma and distress. Housing was a particularly important topic in London. People expressed that there is a lack of choice in housing options and long waiting lists, especially in council housing and temporary accommodation. Available options were also generally deemed inadequate and unsafe due to damp, mould, and safety hazards. Participants brought up the impact of unsafe accommodation on their children's mental health, as well as the trauma and anxiety caused by poor housing. Some people mentioned problems like social housing providers turning the heating off for half the year, or landlords swapping to ineffective radiators which barely heat the room. Living in temporary accommodation was described as a particularly expensive time, because you can't plan your meals, you can't stock the freezer with cheap food, and you don't have any facilities to cook. A kettle and a toaster to feed a family is insufficient and leads to immense stress. Others mentioned having been moved to accommodation far away without being given money for moving costs.

- 'The housing executive and housing associations are making mistakes and then putting arrears onto people which again pushes people further into poverty'
- 'The face of the radiator is cold even when it's on because the landlord replaced them with cheaper radiators that will be paid for by government, which barely heat up'

It is important to acknowledge that very few of the findings explored in this section exist in isolation. We found that whilst each individual element of the system might be tough enough on its own to deal with, when combined they can become unbearable, especially when dealing with the sudden loss of a family member or partner, or an unexpected major life event. One participant referred to this as the '**spiral of poverty**'.

THE SOLUTIONS WHICH WILL END THE NEED FOR FOOD BANKS, PROPOSED BY PEOPLE WITH LIVED EXPERIENCE

THE PROCESS

In the afternoon session at each workshop, the focus shifted to activities where participants explored how the rules could be changed to improve problems discussed in the first half of the session. This analysis of barriers to change and opportunities for new policies or practices then culminated in a set of suggested policy proposals.

A concluding event took place to decide on which of the policy recommendations should be prioritised. Thirty people gathered online and in-person, including staff from all 4 coordinating food banks, the Trussell Trust policy team and organisational leadership, the facilitation team, and workshop participants. The facilitation team felt it was important that this event was also co-produced with both people with lived experience of accessing food banks and Trussell staff, and that it was in a hybrid format, so it could be accessible outside of London.

At the event, we engaged in a brief demonstration of the workshop process, including a game and a scene from one of the workshops, so that those who had not been to a workshop could understand how we arrived at the recommendations. The day was spent unpacking and debating the recommendations, to synthesise and prioritise into 10 key proposals. Groups worked together on various themes, including housing, social security benefits, customer service and wider government policy. Finally, the group voted to identify the three proposals they would prioritise above all others, presented below.

THE FINAL PRIORITISED PROPOSALS

Across all themes, three proposals received the highest number of votes:

1. **THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.** The social security system should be considered as a social investment system which ensures that everyone can afford the essentials. The language of ‘benefits’ should be avoided. This social investment system should be understood as part of the basic social contract between UK residents and their governments, which should be taught in the school curriculum as part of civil and human rights in all nations and regions of the UK. This would require

collaboration with education policy makers in each devolved nation and region.

2. **MAKING WORK AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.** The taper rate should be reformed so that people can more realistically adjust their income when they are moving back into work. And to invest in people going back into work, as well as investing in the next generation, childcare should be accessible, free or affordable, and flexible (for instance, grandparents should be able to be paid, as well as childminders or nurseries). Childcare fees should not be required to be paid up front.
3. **REDUCE WAITING TIMES FOR ACCESSING BENEFITS TO 10 DAYS.** To reduce the need for advance loans, wait times for social security payments should be a maximum of ten days.

Participants commented that the scope of changes that need to be made can be overwhelming, but responded by prioritising ambitious changes to the structural issues which underpin other policy priorities and problems identified through the process.

Housing, homelessness, and accommodation

4. **Cost of accommodation and/or adequacy of Local Housing Allowance (LHA).** The cost of accommodation, whether private or council, must be capped to maintain affordability; and local housing allowance should be increased to meet accommodation costs. The Trussell Trust should align and partner with expert organisations who are advocating for these changes, such as *Shelter* and *Crisis* on housing affordability.
5. **Housing quality and tenants' rights.** Legislation should be strengthened to ensure quality and liveability of social and private housing, and there should be greater investment in the enforcement of this legislation, which must include tenants' rights' advocacy and education.

Social security system and support

6. **Specialist trauma-informed delivery of social security.** All delivery should be trauma-informed, particularly during (but not limited to) disability assessments. Social security systems should be designed by disabled people, with on-site advocacy available for all people seeking support. This culture shift may also involve staff being seconded to community groups to understand different perspectives on human-centred, trauma-informed work.
7. **Monitoring and assessment based on mutually agreed goals.** Assessment of staff performance should be guided by impact on the customer and should focus on their experience and the efficacy in meeting desired outcomes agreed with the customer. Additionally, the

DWP should ensure complaints are handled quickly so that people do not experience delays if they wish to refer their complaint to the Independent Case Examiner. The Independent Case Examiner should also work on reducing the time it takes to deal with complaints about DWP services.

8. **Improve access for everyone.** Social security systems must prioritise individualised support to understand access needs of each person, and then meet those access needs via digital, in-person support, or other means.
9. **Improved digital access and services.** Improved digital systems for accessing social security benefits, alongside investment in improved and affordable and/or access to internet connection for all UK residents.
10. **Single consistent point of contact.** People seeking support should have access to a single point of contact, and services should be joined up and offered holistically. Advice services should be accessible to anyone seeking social security support.
11. **Making social security readily accessible and streamlined.** Social security applications and support need to be integrated holistically into other support systems for people coming out of prison, care leavers, and other groups at risk of social isolation.

CONCLUSION

People greatly value the support they receive at food banks, but they do not believe food banks are the right solution to the challenges they face. No matter how much care and concern food banks devote to ensuring people have a positive experience, it is not compassionate, just, or dignified to leave people having to rely on charitable food aid to be able to secure the essentials.

This participatory strand of the Hunger in the UK research project has been an essential part in not only understanding the problems that are driving food bank use, but also in crafting solutions to these problems with the expertise of people with lived experience of financial hardship at the heart of this work.

Despite the sobering picture this report reveals we also see the stubborn hope of a growing network of people who believe better is possible, and an ever-clearer roadmap of how this might be achieved.

This roadmap demands change in multiple areas of policy - at the local, devolved, and national level - if we are to meet our ambitious, but achievable vision for a UK without the need for food banks. People with lived experience of financial hardship have vital insight to give, and their informed, innovative, and implementable ideas for change are seen throughout this report.

The drivers of hunger are complex and multi-faceted, with debt, insecure work, social isolation and adverse life events exacerbating financial hardship, but it is clear that an inadequate social security system is the most significant driver of food bank need. The solutions proposed through this participatory work are demanding a shift in the social security system which is currently not fit for purpose. Through recognising social security as a social investment that ensures everyone is provided with adequate support to afford the essentials at the time they need to and provide a more accessible and affordable route into work, then we will be one significant step closer to ending the need for food banks in the UK.

WHERE NEXT FOR PARTICIPATION AT THE TRUSSELL TRUST?

The participatory and creative policy making process of *Changing the Rules* brought real value to both the Hunger in the UK project and the work of the Trussell Trust overall. Participants valued being involved in co-producing recommendations and solutions, as opposed to focusing only on identifying the problems. There was a strong appetite to see more of this work, with suggestions that the Trussell Trust could replicate this process with more food banks in the Trussell Trust's network.

In 2020, The Trussell Trust board signed off a Participation Framework to guide the work of the organisation in the delivery of its ambition to collaborate more closely with people who experience poverty. Our aim is to be a 'participatory organisation' with lived experience knowledge part of our DNA, not simply an organisation that does participation. *Changing the Rules* itself came about through activity driven by our delivery of this framework.

Building on our work to date, we will continue to grow the network of lived experience partners, with varied background and experiences of financial hardship, who collaborate with Trussell Trust. In July 2023 a new Lived Experience Network will launch, meeting monthly the group will collaborate across The Trussell Trust to help shape our thinking and to co-produce recommendations and solutions.

We are also increasing our support to food banks in the network to help them grow connections with those they serve and develop participatory activities locally that can change policy, minds, and communities.

Finally, we will support individuals we collaborate with to develop their leadership, activism, and other skills in some way, so that everyone has an opportunity to grow through their partnership with Trussell Trust.

Ultimately, by standing in solidarity with people who have been forced to use emergency food aid, and seeking shared solutions rooted in their wisdom, together we will end the need for food banks.

APPENDIX A: THE UNEDITED PROPOSALS FROM ALL FOUR WORKSHOPS, SHARED IN FULL

There were 42 proposals in total, which we slimmed down to 35 given duplications. The policy team then reviewed all proposals, resulting in an initial prioritisation of 24 for the wider Trussell staff and food bank staff teams to work with at the concluding workshop, given there wouldn't be time to discuss all 35.

The policy proposals are grouped under themes. During the conclusion workshop we provided a structured space to work through the ideas and prioritise them using our 'PAVES' approach which provides prompts for making decisions about which are most important to us (this is an approach already routinely used by the policy team to support the development of policy positions and recommendations):

1. **Policy:** How does the suggestion fit with what we already know about existing policy?
2. **Achievable:** Does it feel feasible, when we think about national and local politics?
3. **Values:** Does it match up with, or conflict with, our values of community, compassion, justice, dignity?
4. **Evidence:** Does the policy proposal fit with what we know from other research about the problems?
5. **Strategic:** How far would this take us towards achieving our vision of a UK without the need for food banks?

The proposals in this next section are in the form of how they were discussed and decided on in the workshops, coming directly from people with lived experience of financial hardship. These proposals are unedited and have not been through the PAVES process outlined above so do not necessarily reflect the views and values of the Trussell Trust or the food banks in which the workshops took place.

A) 'CUSTOMER SERVICE' AND CULTURE FROM THE DWP & JCP

These points relate to all communication from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP). This includes the role of the Job Centre Plus (JCP), but some channels of communication will be managed by other providers or directly by the government.

- 1. Staff would be trained before they start the job on human-centred, trauma-informed approaches.** Culturally, the onus would be on staff to make sure people feel relaxed, and are treated in a warm, helpful manner. Training in empathy would be particularly important for those dealing with PIP claims.
- 2. Funding would be redistributed from security guards to in-house advocacy and mental health support** and to provide access to advocacy during appointments.
- 3. Monitoring and assessment of employees would be based on connections with people and goals achieved for their clients** (for instance job description changes, on the job training, re-defining their roles), rather than the number of calls they get through in a day. People working in the benefits system would have accountability for the case they're taking on, and the outcome of that case.
- 4. A percentage of staff working in the benefit system would have to be seconded each year to community groups and charities.** This would lead to more joined up working and would have mutual benefit: government staff would learn about the impact of people not receiving their entitlements, and charity staff would learn more about the system.

B) ACCESSING SOCIAL SECURITY ENTITLEMENTS AND SUPPORT

- 5. There would be a single and consistent point of contact for everyone, and there would be an option for a physical meet-up with someone from the benefit office within the first three months** of engaging with social services. An emphasis on digital or telephone interaction does not allow space for the complexity of people's situations to be acknowledged.
- 6. There would be an investment in improving the digital design of the system.** People are spending too long on the phone only to be told that they're not eligible or qualified for a particular support service. If there

were better digital platforms that allowed people to jump through various hoops, it would save time, energy, and stress. These systems would be designed to be accessible for people of all ages, accounting for neurodiversity and disability.

7. **Everyone would have access to universal free internet** because the internet is a basic, essential need. Or, there would be better promotion of phone and internet discount schemes for people on benefits.
8. **There would be a better, integrated system for people coming out of prison** to apply for benefits, and their benefits should automatically restart / trigger a new application on release, rather than starting from scratch.

C) ACCESSING DISABILITY BENEFITS

9. **The government would end the private delivery of social security services.** All delivery of social security services should be in-house in the public sector.
10. **Carers would be able to accompany and represent applicants at PIP interviews,** and the interviewers would be trained and required to listen to advocates, not just the individual.
11. **Assessment appointments would prioritise the applicant's definition of their own daily experience, based on people's 'worst days' rather than how they perform on tests on the day of assessment.** Assessments would be co-designed by people with disabilities.

D) INCOME LEVELS FROM SOCIAL SECURITY ENTITLEMENTS

12. **There would be a 'commitment to consistency'** so that people are not facing extreme and unliveable fluctuations in their monthly income due to sanctions and deductions.
13. **Advanced loans would be banned and replaced with emergency crisis grants for the full period of waiting for UC claim to be approved.** Alternatively, emergency crisis grants would be available and promoted over advanced loans, but advanced loans would still be available.
14. **Both the benefit cap and 2-child limit would be abolished.**

E) WIDER GOVERNMENT POLICY

15. **The taper rate would be made more reasonable** and would mean that people are able to tide themselves over as they adjust to income from work.
16. **Affordable, accessible childcare** would be prioritised by policy makers - the government would recognise that accessible childcare is important in getting people into work.
17. **Universal basic income** would be instituted to ensure that people can find the work they want to do and be a more productive member of society.
18. **Access to healthy food would be a right:** there should be pay-what-you-can at major grocery stores, subsidised by the government.
19. **The social security system would be renamed the ‘Social Investment System’** and there would be a **public messaging campaign** to reframe social security as an **investment** into the economy, to stop the narrative that divides people who get income from work and people who get income from social security.

F) HOUSING, HOMELESSNESS & TEMPORARY ACCOMMODATION

20. **Everyone living in a building would have equal access to all of the facilities**, regardless of how much they pay, such as green spaces and playgrounds. Local Authorities would act on landlord discrimination to ensure this.
21. **Moving costs would be covered by the Council** when people are moved to different temporary or emergency accommodation.
22. **There would be rent caps instituted** to ensure that the Local Housing Allowance sufficiently covers the cost of rent.
23. **Rent in social housing would be taken out of Universal Credit payments and paid directly from the DWP**, to ensure that recipients are not automatically in arrears and landlords have more security.

Further policies which were not prioritised for discussion at the concluding workshop

These proposals are unedited and have not been through the PAVES process outlined above so do not necessarily reflect the views and values of the Trussell Trust or the food banks in which the workshops took place.

24. Customer facing DWP staff would be subject to regular peer-reviewed appraisals throughout their contracts, undertaken by people with lived experience of accessing social security. There would be a community audit where interactions with government and council staff can be recorded for review. This could also involve using 'secret shoppers.'
25. At the first point of contact with the social security system it would be mandatory for an advisor to be present.
26. Food banks and job centres would both function as community support centres, which act as a hub for community outreach and support.
27. Staff would be more aware of what is available locally so they can signpost people more effectively, especially when services are changing quickly. Staff would be properly trained in how to effectively share information, and internal communication systems would match up to create a smoother digital offer for people to engage with.
28. There would be a 'live chat' service rather than the journal - speeding up efficient communication.
29. Government policy would change to improve how social security instalments are calculated and administered.
30. Benefits income would be calculated based on household needs and the amount paid across all welfare benefits would be increased, with payments every 2 weeks rather than 4.
31. The system for PIP allowance should be built on trust and not on quotas, with a person-centred approach.
32. There would be more resourcing for the system so that there is a smaller cap on the number of people a single case worker can support. People working in the benefits system are overworked, rushed and have no time in the day to give individual support.
33. Local Authorities would conduct regular, full audits or stock takes of housing conditions.

34. Tenants' rights that would apply to people living in council housing would be applied to all tenancies, including temporary and emergency accommodation.
35. There would be regulation on landlords to ensure that their properties are in line with national standards of what is acceptable for a home - the Local Authority would be performing housing assessments and penalising / fining landlords who do not meet the minimum standard.

APPENDIX B: BIOGRAPHIES AND BACKGROUND

About the Project Designers and Lead Facilitators:

Together for Change Panel are a group of people from across the UK with experience of financial hardship who work with the Trussell Trust on projects focused on the three pillars of our strategy to end the need for food banks: Changing Minds, Changing Communities and Changing Policy. John, Jill and Laura who co-designed and co-facilitated the Changing the Rules workshops are members of this panel.

Katy Rubin is a [Legislative Theatre](#) practitioner based in the UK, working with local councils, advocacy organisations and community groups to co-create policies and practices that are human-centred, equitable, innovative and effective. Currently working in Manchester, Glasgow, Coventry and London on housing and homelessness, food poverty, the climate crisis, and cultural policy, she is passionate about creative, community-driven policy change that moves the needle towards equity. Her Legislative Theatre work with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority was awarded the International Observatory of Participatory Democracy's 2022 [award](#) for Best Practice in Citizen Participation.

Dan Boyden is a theatre practitioner, consultant, trainer and facilitator. He has built a career designing and delivering creative, social programmes in the U.K and internationally. He works across sectors supporting young people, communities, organisations, and local government to explore how change happens. Dan is a [Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellow](#) and a Global Master Facilitator for the British Council's [Active Citizens Social Leadership programme](#). Dan did a 2017 Ted Talk about the work he does and the approach he takes.

About Legislative Theatre:

The project methodology is based on the Legislative Theatre practice, part of a growing movement of participatory democracy and co-production around the UK. Three decades ago, Theatre of the Oppressed founder Augusto Boal brought a community theatre performance into Rio de Janeiro's city council chambers, and invited community members and his fellow councillors to test out changes to local legislation by improvising in the scene. Legislative Theatre is now practised around the world, from New York City to the Netherlands to India --

creative, inclusive, participatory democracy. [Legislative Theatre](#) (LT) initiatives are now spreading rapidly across the UK. In an LT process, communities directly impacted by unjust policies and practices **create** a play that articulates those problems; audiences and policymakers **watch** and discuss. Then, audiences **act** onstage to rehearse ways to confront the problems and test new strategies. Based on those improvisations, actors and audiences **propose** ideas for policies, working together with advocates and officials. Finally, participants **vote** and policymakers commit to specific actions.